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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

No. MCCLIX. SEPTEMBER 1920. VOL. CCVIII.

AT THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL.

BY CAPTAIN PETER WRIGHT,

(Late Assistant Secretary, Supreme War Council).

A WELL-KNOWN military writer and a combatant in the great war, Major Grasset, has lately made a collection of extracts from the two great works of Foch, written more than twenty years ago, which are rather too voluminous for the ordinary reader, though even before the war curious inquirers, without the least direct interest in military affairs, had been attracted by books which treat war from such a philosophical height. These short extracts, published by Major Grasset in book form, reveal the fiery disposition and calculating brain which Foch always points out as the mark of a military leader. But prefaced to these extracts is a short study of the life of Foch. Now this is of unusual interest, because Major Grasset, from the text itself, has evidently obtained his information from the innermost circles of the French General Staff: some expressions, some phrases ring very like those of Foch himself: the resemblance can hardly be fortuitous. But if not from Foch himself, then the information must come from the small group of officers who have always been immediately next to him while he was in any position of high command, for there are some facts, and especially some dates, which can only be known to this group. And as some of this information is new, and throws a new light on some of the great events in which our armies took part, and especially the battle of St Quentin, it is of the highest interest. Having been at the Supreme War Council during the winter 1917-1918 as assist-

ant secretary, I can tell at first hand and with numerical precision the events of that period which he relates at second-hand and vaguely.

The world knows Foch only at the height of his achievement, when he drove the Germans before him and would have destroyed them altogether had not his final and fatal blow been stopped by the armistice; it knows him at the moment of success, when his position was at its highest, but it knows little of him in adversity when he himself was at his greatest. This preface of Major Grasset's book tells us something, but not enough, of those earlier battles in which he rose, between 4th August and 4th October 1914, from the command of a corps to the command of an army group, and that the most important, and found himself, in the third month of the war, commanding the generals who had commanded him during the first month. During this first period of the war he was far greater than in the last, when the eyes of all the world were fixed on him, when he took all the tricks, but held all the cards. During the first period he held no cards at all, but won all the same. Then, as later, the words of the greatest of ancient historians, used by him of the man he admired most, are applicable to Foch. "He gave proof of a power of penetration that was natural, wonderful, and infallible. When any crisis arose, however little he expected it, and without any examination, a view of the situation, far superior to that of any one else, sprang from him at once, and he predicted the subsequent course of events with no less certainty. His exposition of his own plans was most lucid: his criticism of other men's schemes consummate: and however incalculable the result might seem, he always knew what would succeed and what would not. In a word, uniting the deepest intellectual grasp with a lightning rapidity of decision, he was the model man of action."

Major Grasset gives us only a slight sketch of his earlier feats.

At the Trouée de Charmes in Lorraine, August 24, 1914, he and Dubail defended the line of the Meurthe against odds at least ten times as great. On the last day of August he was put at the head of the 9th Army by Marshal Joffre. This army was to hold the French centre in the first battle of the Marne, and it was against the centre that the main shock of the Germans was to be expected. Foch had 70,000 men: Von Bulow and Von Hausen, who attacked him (or rather, who faced him, for he attacked them at once as soon as they came within his reach on September 6), had 300,000 men. Thus the plan of the battle hung on whether Foch could hold these odds, while Maunoury and Lord French enveloped the German right: if the Germans could have

rolled him over and cut the long allied line from Verdun to Paris in two, they would not have been even endangered by this enveloping movement, for they would have destroyed most of the French armies. So the whole plan of the Marne hung on Foch. It was a speculation by Joffre that his lieutenant could win the odds of more than four to one. "Victory resides in will," writes Foch. "A battle won is a battle in which one has not admitted oneself defeated." Von Bulow's official report has been published, and we know that, for all his material superiority, he was a beaten man before the battle began. Twenty years before his spiritually superior adversary, then Colonel Foch, had written "Victory always comes to those who merit it by their greater strength of will and intelligence."

Foch had only one week between the 1st and 7th of September to inspire the ninth army, largely composed of defeated and retreating troops, with his determination in that desperate struggle. Almost at once he was given something still more difficult to do. In the beginning of October the fall of Antwerp, the fortress which protected the whole of the Allies' left flank, was suddenly seen to be imminent, and another catastrophe impending. Joffre immediately turned to Foch. Late at night on October 4, Foch, who was at Chalons, was told over the telephone that he had been appointed commander of the North-Western army group. He left Chalons at ten o'clock in the night. Between four and six o'clock next morning he had given their instructions to his army commanders, and at nine o'clock was directing the furious battle raging round Lens. As we know now, since M. Poincaré made his speech on Foch's admission to the Academy, it was his view, single and alone among those of the Allied commanders, that the British, few in number and battle-worn as they were, could still hold Ypres, that gave our troops the chance of winning the first battle of Ypres, the crowning victory of 1914, the glorious year of the war for both the Allies. This was the Foch of 1914.

But subsequent years of the war are far less creditable to the Allies than 1914, for never again during the remaining four years, except for a few weeks in 1918, were the Central Powers to be superior on the Western European front, and that superiority not only short but slight: and during that period in 1918 the Germans very nearly won the war. The Entente were brought to the edge of defeat by disregarding the advice of Foch, and again saved by him. We can never justly allot the merit of winning the war, or learn the errors that prevented us gaining it far earlier, or profit by the lessons of the struggle, unless we make the effort to discard our vanity and understand the truth. For struggle there will be again in the future, if not in the im-

mediate present; the evil of war is too inherent to be extirpated by the new, fashionable, but delusive ideas with which some hope to cut it out.

For a period that can almost be called of years the British and French were at least 7 to 4 to the Germans in men on the Western front, and almost double in material: in January 1917 the Allies had 178 divisions on the French front to the German 127, which, allowing for the smaller size of the German division, gives more than the proportion mentioned. The dissolution of the Russian army, which began after the Revolution, went on rapidly during 1917: in January 1918 the two Russian groups of armies facing the Central Powers, which had before the Revolution consisted of six armies—that is, 74 infantry divisions, huge Russian divisions, and 18½ cavalry divisions—had sunk to 325,000 men as a total, and of these the French Military Mission calculated only 35,000 men were in the fighting line; at one railroad point during the winter 10,000 deserters had been counted daily going home; and this collapse left the Roumanian army with a fighting strength of 18 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions exposed, unprotected, and helpless, and eventually driven to submission, the same army which after the defeat of 1916 had sufficiently recovered themselves to inflict a severe defeat on the Germans in 1917. So towards the end of 1917 both Russia and Roumania could be taken as out of it. The new ally, America, had hardly begun to come in: in December 1917 there were only 3½ American divisions in France, each of them being, however, two or three times as big as a German division. But in the interval between the exit of Russia, an empire of more than 160 million people, and the entrance of America, a country of more than 100 million, the Allies were compelled to carry on the war with diminished forces. This question therefore put itself to their statesmen, whether or not they could get through this difficult interval. The Germans might be strong enough to snatch a victory during this period of our weakness, in which case it was the duty of our statesmen to make peace while still undefeated; or, on the contrary, we might be able to resist them till the weight of the Americans inclined the balance in their favour, in which case it was their duty to resist till that moment. The course to be steered towards the end of 1917 depended upon obtaining as accurate a calculation as possible of the enemy's forces, and of their own, leaving out of account Russia and America. To the making of this calculation a War Cabinet Committee applied itself, concentrating all the figures obtainable by the information branches of all the Allies. This Committee on Man Power, whose conclusions were to decide whether the Allies should submit, compromise, or fight, reckoned these

were the forces of the adversaries:

The combatant strength (not the ration strength) of the British and the French in all the existing theatres of war—in France, Italy, the Balkans, Palestine, and Mesopotamia—was 3,700,000 (three million seven hundred thousand) men; the combatant strength of the Germans in all theatres, including the Russian and Roumanian, was 3,400,000 (three million four hundred thousand) men. Therefore Britain and France alone, in December 1917, were, and had been for two years, numerically stronger than Germany.

The total of the combatant Allied Forces—British, French, Italian, Belgian, Portuguese, Serbian, Greek, and including 85,000 Americans — was, in December 1917, 5,400,000 (five million four hundred thousand) men. There were no Russians or Roumanians reckoned in. But the total of the Central Powers — German, Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Turkish — was only 5,200,000 (five million two hundred thousand) men. This included more than 1¾ millions who were still on the Russian and Roumanian front.

The arrival of these last on any theatre might create a momentary risk for the Allies, though they would still have had a total superiority; but, till that transference took place, their numbers on every theatre in December 1917 was higher. In the Turkish lands the Allies were at six to five to their opponents; in the Balkans, as four to three; in Italy, as thirteen to eight; in France, still very nearly six to four. On the Western Front, properly understood, stretching from the North Sea to the Adriatic, the number of their field-guns were six to five of the enemy, and their heavy guns as seven to six. Everywhere the advantage of numbers, whether considered together, or, at that date, in any particular place, was theirs.

How much more, and how crushing, had their superiority been when more than 120 Russian and Roumanian divisions were fighting on their side. Yet they had failed to win the war.

The plan of the Allied statesmen, perhaps indeed because of their great advantage in numbers, had been to hope for the best. Now enemy reinforcements of one million bayonets might appear on any of their fronts, for German and Austrian divisions had begun to stream westwards. But the plan of all of them, except one, was still to hope for the best till the arrival of the Americans decided the war. Even M. Clemenceau, the least inert of men, was of this opinion; and in January 1918 told the assembled military and political leaders of the alliance that the date of victory would be the autumn of 1919, for then the American strength would be at its height. For this American giant, though he intended to put forth all his strength, only bestirred himself slowly.

When M. Clemenceau uttered this prognostic there were 3½ American divisions in France, only one of which was in the line; and the American Chief of the Staff could then only promise that there would be 4 fully trained by July, 8 in October 1918, and 20 in April 1919. The one statesman who refused to resign himself to this policy, or this absence of policy, was Mr Lloyd George.

Immediately on coming into power he had invented a new instrument of government, the War Cabinet: this body of four sitting continuously, and issuing orders to all the Ministries through its secretary, was virtually a dictatorship, and in effect a personal dictatorship; and though this is as yet unperceived, this concentration of power in the one office of the Prime Minister has to some degree survived the war, for it is the existence of a secretariat, both in the War Cabinet and the larger Cabinet—innovation as it is—that makes him almost absolute.

For in both these small executive bodies there are no fixed rules of procedure or methods of voting, like, for example, at a board of directors. In the War Cabinet, and apparently in the Cabinet that has succeeded it, both the settlement of their agenda and, what is still more important, the formulation of their decision was left in the hands of the secretary, largely owing to his skill and indefatigable industry. The secretary, therefore, without having any wish to do so, must to some extent control their decisions, especially as in many or most of their discussions, what was their real decision remained very doubtful.

It happens that the only holder there has so far been of this post has acted as the assiduous, docile, and inseparable attendant of the Prime Minister, so that the War Cabinet's secretariat was very much in effect the Prime Minister's secretariat. Through this secretary, and perhaps without any design, but by the natural adoption of so great a convenience, the will of the Prime Minister tended to be the will of the War Cabinet. This growth of the Prime Minister's office (to which other causes contributed, such as the selection by him of Ministers who had never been in the House of Commons, and who therefore could only consider themselves as chosen by him alone) is the great constitutional change of the war. It tends to make the office more and more like an American President, absolute, but subject to selection every four years. Whatever its defects and merits in peace, it was only with this authority for immediate and uncontrolled command that the war could really be carried on. In war the Prime Minister during the whole day was like a swimmer in rough seas: one wave after another, and no sooner breasted than another came rolling on, and every question requiring a decision without delay, when

it was always better to risk taking action wrongly than not to act at all.

This creation of a central and supreme authority had averted the dangers of 1917, especially the threat of starvation made by the U-boats. If unity of command had done so much at home, it was natural for Mr Lloyd George to think that it might be no less effective abroad.

For the war did not present itself to the national leaders of the Alliance in the same shape as to the public, which entertained, and still entertains, the flattering idea that we had been struggling against immense odds. This was one of the many fictions with which it had always been considered necessary to drug the nation, though their devotion always had been equal to any sacrifice and their fortitude to any deprivation; but the truth was, and could not appear as anything else to the leaders, that we were big and our adversaries small. For years the Germans had stood at bay, surrounded by more numerous enemies, who had failed to overcome them.

It therefore might be considered that the allied policy had been wrong. Mr Lloyd George thought so and said so, though the other leaders sitting round the table might be satisfied to wait until the knot untied itself instead of trying to untie it.

There was a remarkable likeness between the three premiers, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando. They all three united in themselves absolutely contrary qualities. Eloquent men have unguarded, unsuspicious, impulsive temperaments, and cunning men are inarticulate and ineloquent. But they all three were both cunning and eloquent, and the conjunction of these opposites is probably what makes a great Parliamentarian, as they all three were. This is perhaps why he is so rare. Suspicious and circuitous in their dealings, the most persuasive and real rhetoric, that struggles to convince and win, quite unlike the vapid speech of formal public utterance, gushed from them at once.

But the British statesmen (and Lord Milner was the complement of Lloyd George, as if provided by nature to supply the natural deficiencies of the Prime Minister) surpassed all the others both in will and insight,—in will because they were resolved to seize and mould coming events, and not wait timidly on their occurrence; in insight because they could see the whole interests of the Alliance as well as the British national interest. In the minds of almost every one sitting round the green baize table at Versailles, the uppermost thought was the security of their own place and the advantage of their own country. This was transparent as soon as they opened their mouths. But the uppermost thought in Mr Lloyd George's mind was to find the way out and take it and win the war, whatever he risked. In spite of his oblique and subterranean me-

thods: his inveterate taste for low and unscrupulous men: of the distrust felt for him by his favourites even at the height of their favour: of his superficial, slipshod, and hasty mind, this determination of character made him, without any assumption on his part, the leader of the Alliance. The half-deified chiefs, whom the prostrate Germans almost worshipped as idols, never ceased to proclaim what magniloquently they called their will to victory. But none of them ever had it like this little Welsh lay preacher and attorney, who remained so deeply stamped with the characteristics of these early occupations even at this sublime elevation of power.

Now that the Russians and Roumanians were out, or going out, the Germans were sure to be equal again on the West, and during the summer of 1918 to be rather bigger.

In January 1917 there had been 127 German divisions in France: in December 1917 there were 151: in January 1918, 158. It was like watching a river rise, which rises only inch by inch, but which may, after a certain level, flood and sweep away everything. After keeping off so many enemies at such a great disadvantage, the Germans might hope to overcome them now the advantage lay on their side. For while in January 1917 the Allies had had 178 divisions in France, in December 1917 they had only 169.

Ludendorff felt certain that with equal numbers he could win the war in the West, and that winter he told the main Committee of the Reichstag that the odds were 3 to 1 on him. This assertion must have been genuine, for he never could have imposed another effort on the Germans, exhausted as they were with the desperate struggle of three years' war on so many fronts against so many opponents, had he had any doubt of the result. About the same time the extent of this exhaustion was disclosed at those secret meetings of the States of the Hapsburg monarchy, in which they discussed their foreign policy, known as the Delegations. The question being whether and how to continue the war, the Delegations were told what were the losses of the Central Powers. But some of the members of the Delegations were Poles, who, as a partitioned people, had a foot in each camp. Through this leak the information reached the Allies.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose population at the outbreak of the war may be perhaps placed at 55 million, had had 10,300,000 (ten million three hundred thousand) men of military age. Of these, 7,600,000 (seven million six hundred thousand) had become casualties.

The German Empire, whose population at the outbreak of war may perhaps be placed at about 70 million, had had 14 million men of military age, of which 12,600,000 (twelve million six hundred thousand) had been passed fit for military service, out of whom 7,700,000

(seven million seven hundred thousand) had become casualties.

So, in rough proportions, the Central Empires turned a fifth of their populations into soldiers, and had lost a tenth of them in three years. These figures, if right, give a basis for an exact calculation how much wider the suffering of a modern war is than it used to be in the eighteenth century. Gibbon laid it down that the highest proportion of soldiers that a civilised state could maintain was one hundredth of its population. But in the twentieth century that proportion had risen to a fifth. So the circle of those exposed to the dangers and pains of war had been enlarged twenty times by our increased means of accumulating and producing wealth.

So in the autumn of 1917 a last and desperate attempt of the Central Powers to win the war in the ensuing nine months was to be anticipated. Mr Lloyd George had come to doubt more and more whether the system of the Allies, which since 1914 had yielded nothing but failure and disaster, could meet this attack; if it failed when superior in number, it was hardly likely to succeed when inferior. During the whole of 1917 he and Lord Milner had accepted the military adviser bequeathed to them by Mr Asquith — General Robertson. His plan, and he had no other, was to raise more and more men; if the two sides were allowed to go on killing each other in France indefinitely, when all the Germans were dead there would still be a few Allies left and they would win the war. This was his simple strategy, so far as it could be gathered from the memoranda he submitted to the War Cabinet, to which the future historian of the war is earnestly referred. During the last half of 1917 it had led to a huge and almost useless slaughter of Englishmen. During the Flanders offensive, lasting from June 1 to November 13, the 2nd and 5th armies had had casualties of 268,396 (two hundred and sixty-eight thousand three hundred and ninety-six) men and 13,075 (thirteen thousand and seventy-five) officers on ground over which, in the ensuing year, the Allies were to sweep in a few days. The German casualties are unknown, but Ludendorff tells us that going over the ground he saw two khaki dead for every field-grey.

Before the war the Director of Military Operations at the War Office had been Sir Henry Wilson; and in the natural course of events the position of Chief of the Imperial General Staff, held by General Robertson, would have come to him; but he had been passed over, in spite of his high reputation, by Mr Asquith, who had a grudge against him for the part he played in Irish politics. General Wilson, in effect, maintained:

"The fault of the Allies' system has always been that there was no system at all; their political has never been

adjusted to their military action. If it had been, Bulgaria might in 1915 have been made to come in on our side. Their military action has not been connected: if it had been, the intervention of Roumania in 1916 might have been decisive.

"If the war had been directed by a central and supreme body, co-ordinating political with military effort, and army with army, instead of them being connected by temporary arrangements, missions, liaisons, the Central Powers would have succumbed long ago. But the absence of unity, for want of which we have failed to attain victory, is now going to give it to them. They have now one instead of two fronts, and, free on the East, they are going to throw their whole weight on the West. That front, which from the North Sea to the Adriatic forms a single front, has never been treated as such. It is just possible for the British, French, and Italian armies to act separately when on the offensive as they have been most of the time; but now they will have, till the Americans arrive in force, to stand on the defensive. The armies of the Central Powers will crush each separately, unless there is a single central command to give the whole strength of the other two Allied armies, at once and with no delay, to the third."

These prognostics were too soon justified. As Major Grasset says, "the thunderbolt fell without so much as the warning of the lightning flash."

On 25th October 1917 the Germans broke through the Italian front at Caporetto, and in the ensuing retreat General Cadorna lost a quarter of a million men in casualties and a quarter of a million men in prisoners. His army almost entirely dissolved. So the first German offensive in the West had almost destroyed the Italian army.

Foch was then Chief of the French General Staff. Retired in 1916, he had been given, as Major Grasset tells us, the special task of planning the defence of Switzerland: for, as soon as the Russian Revolution had taken place, and a prospect of a German offensive in the West therefore appeared, the Swiss Government (so small was their faith in German professions) had anticipated that the Central Powers would violate its neutrality in order to turn the Allied right in France. Foch had produced a plan, exquisite in its subtle simplicity, by which the troops of the Swiss confederation, after acting as covering troops, would have retired to the central, inexpugnable massif of their country, while 50 French divisions would have caught in flank the German armies pouring through the flat corridor of the Aar Valley, too narrow for them either to deploy or retreat, while the Swiss army hung on the other flank.

But the blow fell in Italy, not Switzerland. Within twenty-four hours of hearing the news of the break through

Foch had begun entraining French troops to go to Caderna's help: 6 French followed by 5 English divisions had hurried there. Even with this assistance Caderna intended abandoning the line of the Piave, fearing the position could be turned from the Alps, and retreating to the line of the Mincio. Foch hastened to his headquarters and, as Major Grasset politely puts it, "persuaded Cadorna that he had not suffered definitive defeat, and that the enemy could be checked on the Piave." Had Foch's decision not been so rapid—for he had given orders for the French divisions to be moved towards Italy before Cadorna asked for help—the line of the Piave would certainly not have been retained. But the next line, that of the Mincio, gave a very long front to the Italians, instead of the short line of the Piave from the Alps to the sea: as Cadorna was never tired of repeating when he went to Versailles, not eleven, but twenty or thirty Anglo-French divisions would have been required to hold the line of the Mincio. This would have been so serious a diminution of the Anglo-French forces in France, that it might have seemed preferable to abandon the Italians altogether. Only Foch's promptitude prevented Caporetto from being a blow fatal to Italy.

Foch insists in his 'Principles of War' that a battle is a "crisis, a bloody and terrible drama." But in his ordinary language and unconsciously, he always uses a word that is even more expressive of his conception of the pace at which the events of a battle proceed and the consequent necessity of quick decision. He never says a battle "begins," he always says, rather strangely, "a battle is off," using the word properly applicable to horses starting in a race (*une fois la bataille partie*).

But it is some of the subsequent discussions that took place between Foch and Caderna that show the faults of the Allied system more than the battle itself. The eleven Anglo-French divisions in Italy were a definite diminution of the Allied forces in France, but they were a definite loss only because of the insufficient railroad communication between France and Italy.

So defective were these that some of the French divisions coming to the help of Cadorna had had to cross the Alps on foot, or else they would have arrived too late. When the whole Western front was treated as one, this defect was evident at once: an indefinite number of Italian divisions could have come to France, or Anglo-French divisions to Italy, if the railroad communications had been improved sufficiently to shift them back again shuttle-wise whenever and wherever they were wanted. A few weeks before the 1918 campaign began it was too late to start construction; whenever Weygand, Foch's Chief of the Staff, and Cadorna at Versailles discussed the subject, they used to lament

and shrug and sigh over its being too late. But if a central military organ of command for the whole front between the North Sea and the Adriatic had existed before, the necessity for the improvement would have appeared as soon as they started discussing, and it could easily have been carried out in the early part of the war.

Caporetto decided Mr Lloyd George. At a conference held at Rappallo in the beginning of November, the Supreme War Council was founded as a central directing political body for the whole alliance: it was a monthly meeting of the principal Ministers of each country at Versailles. There was a permanent staff of Military Representatives at that place to act as their military advisers. These military advisers were Sir Henry Wilson; Weygand, Chief of the Staff to Foch in Paris; General Cadorna; and later, General Bliss, American Chief of the Staff. This, as Major Grasset says, "was a hesitating but not less decisive step towards unity of command."

The plans elaborated between Foch and Sir Henry Wilson at Versailles can be better understood if the forces in opposition, as they were to be between the middle and end of February 1918, when the fighting was expected to begin, are known.

By the flow of divisions from the East, the Germans in France then had 178 divisions—estimated at 1630 battalions, 1,232,000 rifles, and 24,000 sabres; 8800 field-guns and 5500 heavy guns. The allies had available 97 French, 57 British, 10 Belgian, 1 American, and 2 Portuguese—altogether 167 divisions, estimated at 1585 battalions, 1,480,000 rifles, 74,000 sabres; 8900 field-guns and 6800 heavy guns. So the Allied totals were still superior to the German, the German units, divisions and battalions, being smaller than the Allied. The rate at which their divisions could be brought from the East, where they still had 58, of rather inferior quality, was about 10 a month. Of those, perhaps 40 at the most could be expected to appear in France, and so their maximum strength, between 200 and 210 divisions, would be reached in May. But the American divisions (of which one only was now in the line and counted) were beginning to come in; so that at no time would the German superiority in number over the Allies be near so great as the Allied superiority over the Germans had been for at least one and a half years. There ought therefore to have been no cause for anxiety.

On the Italian front there were still the 11 Angle-French divisions sent there after Caporetto, and 50 Italian divisions: 764 battalions, 633,000 rifles, 6400 sabres; 3700 field-guns and 2100 heavy guns. The enemy had only 43½ Austrian and 3 German, a total of 46½ divisions: 439,000 rifles, 3400 sabres; 3000 field-guns and 1500 heavy guns.

On the Italian front therefore we were still 6 to 4 in spite of Caporetto.

In the East the Austrians had 34 divisions, some of which might be expected to come to Italy; but, on the other hand, the Italians had not yet put into the line all the divisions they had reconstructed out of their defeated troops during the winter, out of which they were ultimately to form the Sixth Army.

In the Balkans there were 23 Bulgarian, 2 German, and 2 Austrian divisions, a total of 27: 294 battalions, 228,000 rifles, 3000 sabres, 972 field-guns, and 353 heavy guns. On our side, 8 French, 4⅓ British, 1½ Italian, 3 Greek, 6 Serbian, 1 Italian in Albania, 23 divisions in all: 271 battalions, 219,000 rifles, 7000 sabres, 1100 field-guns, and 380 heavy guns. Here the enemy was slightly superior; but the Greek mobilisation was not finished. Later in the spring the size of their contingent would be doubled or trebled; this would leave the advantage to the Allies again.

In Palestine and Mesopotamia the Allies were overwhelmingly larger than the Turks, whose battalions, by the time they reached the front, were all reduced to 200 or 300 by desertion. General Allenby in Palestine had 7 British and 1 Indian divisions: 117 battalions, 100,000 rifles, 16,000 sabres, 410 field-guns, and 93 heavy guns. Facing him were 11 Turkish divisions and 1 second-class German division at and south of Damascus: 107 battalions, but only 29,000 rifles and 3000 sabres, and perhaps 200 or 300 guns. We were 3 to 1.

In Mesopotania, 1 British and 5 Indian divisions: 101 battalions, 125,000 rifles, 9000 sabres, 300 field-guns, and 50 heavy guns. Against these the Turks had nominally 5 divisions and 47 battalions, but these only amounted to 18,000 rifles, 1000 sabres, and no more than 100 guns. Here we were 6 to 1.

This survey would not be complete without a mention of Lettow-Vorbeck in East Africa, with his 250 Europeans and 1500 Africans. A British and native force of 12,000 rifles, with a ration (not a combatant) strength of 55,000 were kept busy chasing him.

So the Allies, in spite of losing the Russians and Roumanians, kingdoms of millions of men, who had thrown into the balance more than 120 divisions — in spite of not having more than one American division at their side from a country which had actually registered 25 million men as capable of military service—in spite of these deductions, at the beginning of 1918, still had the advantage.

War abstracts the world into a chess-board where each piece is measured in divisions. At the first meeting of the Supreme War Council, M. Venizelos harangued it for an hour on the past, present, and future glories of Hellas; but when he stopped drenching his audience with his eloquence, the only voice raised was by General Robertson, who asked,

"How many divisions can you give us in the spring?" From the height of the Supreme War Council the number of divisions Greece could supply stood for Greece.

The plan of campaign for 1918 was the work of Foch, Sir Henry Wilson, and Mr Lloyd George, in the sense that while some of the leaders of the Alliance favoured some parts of it, and others others, they were in favour of all of it, and imposed it on all the other leaders. They, in effect, said to the Supreme War Council—

"We will stand on the defensive on the Western front till the Americans arrive: on the defensive, if we give the Allied armies on the front from the North Sea to the Adriatic a single organ of command, we should be able to resist the enemy, if they were able to resist us. But let us take the offensive in Palestine: Turkey is exhausted, and a defeat in Palestine will knock Turkey out. Such a result will have further consequences which we cannot foresee, but which might be decisive."

There were thus two parts to this plan, a central command in the West and an offensive in Palestine.

A central command seems easy to create. The French solution was that it should be given to a French general—a natural claim on a front where they had 103 divisions to 62 British and 50 Italian; but, as Sir Henry Wilson always insisted, the right to command involves the right to dismiss, and therefore it was a right which, in simple entirety, could not be given any general of any single nation, for no army of any nation would bear having its leaders dismissed by a foreigner.

In effect, the function of a generalissimo would have been to fix the quantity and use of the Allied Reserve, if this whole front was treated as a single front. This would have been his work in a defensive campaign, such as was anticipated. Assuming that any point or points were threatened by the enemy, such a generalissimo would have decided the number, place, and movement of units from the rest of the front that were to go to the defence of that point.

Foch and Sir Henry Wilson put forward a simple and ingenious proposal, with the object of giving the three Allied armies all the advantages of a generalissimo without the objections: the three commanders-in-chief were to remain commanders-in-chief; but at Versailles there was to be formed an Executive War Board, with Foch as chairman; Sir Henry Wilson as the British, General Cadorna as the Italian, and General Bliss as the American members. This Board was to have the right to demand from each commander-in-chief a certain number of divisions which it could control. Divisions placed in this General Reserve would be ear-marked, and not to be used by any commander-in-chief without permission of the Executive War Board,

which had authority to fix their number, place, movement, and use.

The Executive War Board, brought into existence to handle the General Reserve, gave each commander-in-chief the advantages of a generalissimo. The General Reserve was a banking account on which each could draw if he was attacked: his drafts would be fixed by the War Board, according to their judgment. On the other hand, he had none of the disadvantages of a generalissimo. No commander-in-chief could suspect his forces were being exploited for the benefit of an Ally's forces, for each nation had its representative on the War Board. Sir Henry Wilson and Foch in effect argued—

"The system by which each commander-in-chief attacks separately is possible when on the offensive. But we must now stand on the defensive. Ludendorff will have about 200 divisions: he will leave 100 in the line and attack one of the three commanders-in-chief — French, British, or Italian — with a mass of manœuvre of 100 divisions: no single commander-in-chief can resist without the assistance of the other. But no commander-in-chief parts with his reserves willingly. There will be discussions and consequent loss of time that may be disastrous. There must be some superior authority to decide at once how much each of the others must contribute to help the one attacked. The Executive War Board, by means of the General Reserve will do this."

Linked to this creation of a central command was the extension of the British front. After a very close consideration, it had been decided by the military representatives, subject to the creation of a General Reserve, to extend that front as far as Barisis, though the French wanted it carried as far as Berry-au-Bac. This left the Fifth British Army under Gough, which joined on to the French, unduly extended, and the Allied line along Gough's front unduly thin. Taking all the factors, and there were many, into consideration, Barisis was a point to which the British armies ought to go. Proceeding on entirely different methods of calculation, both General Cadorna's and Sir Henry Wilson's staffs, working independently, fixed on this point as giving them their just extension.

The military representative argued—

"If the Allied line in France was treated as one front, it could not be equally strong at every point. Some portion must be thinner than others. But the creation of the General Reserve made this particular point a matter of indifference. For if the weak point was attacked, the General Reserve could be drawn there at once, and the War Board had the authority to make the General Reserve as large as it liked, drawing from all armies. So the weakest point could at once be made the strongest."

The other part of the plan of campaign was the Palestine offensive: Allenby already had an overwhelming preponderance over the Turks. That preponderance was to be further increased; he was to be reinforced from Mesopotamia with forces originally fixed at a higher figure, but ultimately amounting to 1 Indian division. An Indian cavalry division in France was to be sent to him. His forces were so large that the real difficulty was supplying him, and his capacity for hitting hard depended much more upon the rate at which the railroad from Egypt could be pushed forward. But with a little time and a great deal of railroad material, it was reckoned he ought to be able to annihilate the very inferior Turkish forces in front of him.

To this Eastern project the French members of the Supreme War Council at first presented some opposition, but assented on condition that no white troops were removed from France for this attempt. There was also the opposition to it from General Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

This plan of campaign, in its two parts, a central command in France and an offensive in Palestine, was in effect the plan that carried the Allies to victory in the autumn: Allenby's annihilation of the Turkish Army in front of him knocked out the corner-stone of the edifice of the enemy's power, and Foch's conduct of the operations in France led to a result that no one had anticipated. But the first winter edition of the plan was better both in means and conception than its autumn successor. Allenby's British troops were taken from him after the disaster of the spring, and Indian divisions substituted. Foch's authority as chairman of the Executive War Board was better conceived and clearer than his authority as generalissimo, which was to "co-ordinate the action of the British and French armies." If the second edition of this plan of campaign finished the war, the first edition would have done it even more surely. So great in war is the importance of a good plan that, as soon as it was found and carried out, the war ended. In the winter of 1917-1918, a friend talking of the difficulties in front of the Allies, said to Foch's Chief of Staff, Weygand—

"However bad our situation may seem now, it was worse for you and General Foch at the Marne; for you were heavily outnumbered, and we will still be superior till the month of April."

Weygand answered—

"Our situation is much worse now; for then we had the magnificent plan of Marshal Joffre, and now we have no plan at all."

The Supreme War Council adopted this plan at a session in the last days of January and the first days of February 1918. The utmost precautions of secrecy were adopted: for

some of the sittings most of the secretaries were excluded from the room. The copies of the plan of campaign and of the minutes of the meeting were limited to a few copies and put in the hands of only a few people. For Ludendorff, as he has now told us, was as anxious about being attacked as the Allies were. His position, a few weeks before the campaign could be expected to open, was anxious and precarious: on almost every front he was outnumbered. The collapse of any of the numerous fronts meant the loss of an Ally whose fall would probably bring down another, till the four Central Powers knocked each other down like skittles. Through the two main channels, Danish and Swiss, along with the indiscretions of the enemy which reached the ears of the Allies, they could know his apprehensions, which he confesses in his published memoirs. Verdun, close to the line of railroad which gave them lateral communication, was a sensitive point in the German defensive system, and here the German General Staff anticipated an attack by the Allies that would forestall theirs. There was no secret more precious than where the Allied attack was coming. The various theatres of war, in which the system of the Central Powers lay, were strung out along an awkward line, separated by nature, and in the East connected by railroad lines of communication insufficient, defective, and slow. Ignorant where the aim of the Allies was, no portion could be firmly defended by Ludendorff unless information was acquired where the blow was intended to fall: then forces sufficient to meet it might be concentrated in that quarter. The information was therefore inestimable.

Public opinion in France and Italy had been canvassing the question of a supreme commander in the field during the whole winter, and was naturally concerned at the disconnection between the three armies defending its soil. To reassure this opinion the news that these armies had been given a certain unity under Foch was published in the papers, but in a vague and misleading way. The other decision, to overwhelm the Turkish armies in Palestine, was guarded with greater precautions of secrecy than any other decision ever taken by the Supreme War Council.

A very sprightly and brilliant writer on military affairs, Colonel Repington, had till the beginning of January been military correspondent of 'The Times': at that date he left 'The Times,' which had grown critical of General Robertson, and became military correspondent of the 'Morning Post.' There he became the avowed exponent of that General's views, referred to himself as the official spokesman of the General Staff, and published information which he could not have obtained anywhere but from the War Office. A letter from him, written in Paris on February 5, was published, denouncing the Inter-Allied War Council

which had just been held. On February the 11th another article by him was published in the 'Morning Post.' This was a detailed and accurate account of the decisions and discussions of the last Session of the Supreme War Council. It described with fulness the Executive War Board as "The Versailles soldiers under the presidency of General Foch," "controlling and directing the reserves," and reveals the machinery by criticising it. Further, he calls on Parliament to intervene, and not permit "a side-show" to take place. The side-show he describes, in the very words of Mr Lloyd George, as recorded in the minutes of the session, as "the delivery of a knock-out blow to Turkey." So as to leave nothing in doubt, he indicates the theatre of war where the side-show is to take place: "the Turks will retire in front of us from Damascus to Aleppo."

The article also tells Ludendorff that Allenby's real difficulty was, the very point of the discussion that the Supreme War Council had had, "How long will it take for our broad-gauge railway, at the rate of half a mile a day, to reach Aleppo?" The article is a summary — a very excellent and concise summary—of the principal decisions and discussions that had taken place at a session where the Supreme War Council had refined on their usual precautions for secrecy, extravagant as these usually were. The first decision of the War Cabinet was to seize the printing presses of the 'Morning Post,' and so suppress it entirely; but after a talk with his Attorney-General, Sir Gordon Hewart, Mr Lloyd George adopted a course much more astute. The editor and Colonel Repington were only prosecuted and fined for a technical offence under the Defence of the Realm Act; and Sir Gordon took care during the prosecution to make only the disclosures about the General Reserve a subject of complaint: the passage about the side-show, which revealed the secret of the Allies, he treated as inoffensive. This artful treatment may have attenuated the effect of the betrayal.

The editor of the 'Morning Post,' whose patriotism was above suspicion, acted, and Colonel Repington no doubt also, from their own sense of duty, and (as the magistrate who convicted them said) they knew the risks they were taking. Colonel Repington disavows in this article having an "official report of these proceedings," or "spoken to any of our military or military representatives who attended"; but he protests too much. In this and subsequent articles from his lively pen he quotes actual phrases—the natural, felicitous, epigrammatic phrases of Mr Lloyd George recorded in the minutes of the session: they must have caught his quick literary eye as he read them over. He could not have had all the information he published, which was absolutely complete, unless he had

been shown an official report of the proceedings. The person who showed them to Colonel Repington can only have been an officer of the General Staff, and it is perfectly easy to guess who it was. That officer was certainly not General Robertson, who is far too rough and straightforward for these devious methods. But it must have been an officer of the General Staff of which General Robertson was the chief, and to defeat a plan which General Robertson opposed he disclosed that plan to a journalist, and thus through him to the enemy. It not only told Ludendorff the plan, but through the article suggested to him a means of parrying the blow, to "evade Allenby's offensive by retiring, and bring the U-boats down the Danube to Constantinople." No officer was punished in consequence of the conviction of Colonel Repington and the editor of the 'Morning Post.'

The Executive War Board—Foch, Wilson, Bliss, Cadorna—got to work at once. Foch proposed that the General Reserve should begin by being a seventh of the total Allied force from the North Sea to the Adriatic, and fixed it at thirty divisions; and letters were addressed to each commander-in-chief asking him if he would contribute his quota, proportionate to the number of divisions he commanded, to the General Reserve. On February 15th, Sir Henry Wilson succeeded Sir William Robertson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London, and was succeeded at Versailles by General Rawlinson.

Foch, when he came to Versailles, was an old man, unwell and worn with anxiety, and beginning to lose his trim horseman's figure. He shone in debate as much as he did in action. In his profound grasp of any question: in his capacity for dealing at once, and conclusively, with any opposite point which he rejected: in the skill with which he exposed the fallacy of an unsound argument: in the flexible readiness with which he adapted his attitude to any contrary idea he felt unable to refute: in the facility and rapidity with which he evolved schemes to reach a common agreement: in the closely woven and orderly logic of his thought: in the rapid, almost exuberant, flow of his speech: in the flashing power of illustrating his meaning: in his ruthless contempt for weaker dialecticians,—in all these he resembled a great Chancery special. In the simplicity of his ways—he had not even an A.D.C., and he used to arrive alone, his papers under his arm, with an absence of ceremony astonishing to any one accustomed to the pomp that surrounds even a brigadier: in the roughness of his ways, a strong contrast to the gentlemanly English and grand manner of the Italians: in his extreme piety,—in all these he was like a rustic French curé, redolent of the soil, the true soil of France, the soil of peasants and soldiers, descend-

ants of those who accomplished the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, very different from the glittering foam of Paris. In sheer intellect he towered above every one at the Supreme War Council as much as Mr Lloyd George did in courage.

During the first half of the month of February the German scheme of attack became clearer. The Allied and the German lines formed an angle, and the German divisions in large masses began to accumulate towards the point of the angle: here also appeared Von Hutier at the head of an army. He was a specialist in surprise attacks, and at the capture of Riga, in the preceding autumn, the Germans had used a new manœuvre invented by him. Instead of collecting their attacking divisions in front of the point at which it was aimed to break through, they were kept very far back from the line, and brought up to the point stealthily the night before, so that the enemy, though he might guess the region, could not guess exactly where. While these divisions were at this distance from the line, they practised over ground artificially made to resemble the real point of attack. It was an invention appropriate to the German genius for secret and tireless organisation.

Foch in effect said to the Executive War Board—

"Ludendorff must launch his mass of attack either westward or southward, either towards the British side of the angle and Cambrai, or towards the French side of the angle and Rheims. But if he is successful and drives one or other of these lines back, he himself presents an unguarded and open flank, and the more successful he is, and the more he enlarges the angle, the longer and therefore the more open and unguarded his flank will be.

"I will therefore divide my General Reserve into three portions, each larger than the other. The smallest portion I will place in Dauphiné, close to the best crossing into Italy; the largest I will concentrate round Paris; the third portion I will place round Amiens. From the concentration of German troops the attack must come in the Rheims or Cambrai region; therefore the bulk of the General Reserve round Paris is best situated to come to the help of either region. The Amiens portion stands behind the British Fifth Army, the weakest point of the line, and ready to support it. The Dauphiné portion is situated so as to be able to go to the assistance of the Swiss or the Italians, in the unlikely event of their being attacked, or to rejoin the rest of the General Reserve."

Foch did no more than outline the part to be played by the General Reserve, for it never was to come into existence. Major Grasset quotes Napoleon as saying that the art of war is simple enough to understand; it is doing it that is difficult. The outline of Foch's plan was perfectly simple: Ludendorff had formed his mass of manœuvre near the apex of the angle formed by

the front in France; it could only be used to drive in the French side of the angle or the British. He could only do one of two things—push back the British to and over the Somme, or the French over the Aisne towards the Marne. In either case he exposed himself to a counter-attack on his open flank from Foch's mass of manœuvre concentrated round Paris. Whichever he did, he had delivered himself into Foch's hands.

In March he chose the British side, and flung himself at Gough's Fifth Army. Ludendorff has also told us why he chose this line of attack: the Allied line was thinnest there, and he chose the line of least resistance. This choice the prescience of Foch had also divined when he intended to put the bulk of the General Reserve round Paris and Amiens. But the General Reserve was never constituted, so Foch never carried out his plan.

The letters sent to the commanders-in-chief by the Executive War Board, asking them to contribute their quota to the General Reserve, were dated February 6: by February 19 the French and Italian answers were received assenting.

On February 22nd Sir Douglas Haig and Petain met at the Grand Quartier General, and arranged another detailed scheme of defence on a completely different principle to that of the General Reserve. It was the principle that if one army was attacked, the other should assist by taking over part of its line. Under the General Reserve plan, an authority higher than that of any of the commanders-in-chief decided what assistance one of them could receive from the other. Under the arrangement of February 22 each commander-in-chief decided for himself what assistance he would give a colleague. It was the principle upon which the offensives against the Germans had been conducted in France, and which the Military Representative at Versailles had considered was unsuited to a defensive plan.

This new scheme must have been known to the leaders of the Allies, and certainly would not have been initiated by Petain, as it was, without the assent of M. Clemenceau. But it was unknown to Foch, who waited patiently for the English answer the whole of February. The fighting was expected to begin the first week in March. On March 3 (and it is the knowledge of this date that shows how well informed Major Grasset is) a letter from Sir Douglas, dated March 2, reached the Executive War Board refusing to contribute any divisions to the General Reserve, except British divisions in Italy, which were not under his command. The Italian military representative immediately declared the Italian contribution to the General Reserve must be considered as withdrawn, if there was to be no English contribution. The General Reserve thus vanished, and with it the

Executive War Board faded away, for it had been brought into existence to handle the General Reserve, and for no other purpose. Though for some time it continued to discuss, it never was to act. Major Grasset says, not quite accurately—

"Finally, in their session of March 3, and in spite of the energetic protests of General Foch, the Council went so far as to decide upon an important reduction of the Inter-Allied Reserve, and to envisage nothing more than resisting as well as might be the German effort, though this threatened to be of the most formidable type."

The refusal of Sir Douglas was natural, for he could not undertake the double liability of taking over more French line and feeding the General Reserves as well.

The Protocol, the Minutes, as we say, of the arrangement between him and General Petain as drawn up at the Grand Quartier General, are contained in document No. 5476 of the French Intelligence Section (3ième Bureau, as the French call it). This document has only to be placed next to the Resolutions of the Supreme War Council, creating the Executive War Board and the General Reserve, for the inconsistency to appear. It was impossible to carry out both plans.

This arrangement was made on February 22; but this document, No. 5476 of the 3ième Bureau, Grand Quartier General, was not drawn up till March 5, and is dated March 5. There must be some reason for this delay in making minutes which should naturally be made as soon as possible after the event they record. It is easy to find the reason: Petain, the commander-in-chief at the front, did not want Foch, the Chief of the Staff, at the Boulevard des Invalides in Paris, to know of this agreement, which destroyed the scheme of the General Reserve, till it was too late to protest. The fighting was expected to begin in March, and the drafting of the minute was delayed till then. So far as Foch was concerned, the agreement was a secret agreement, and he was therefore the victim of an intrigue. Speaking of the catastrophe that was to follow, Major Grasset says: "There was needed this extreme peril and the crushing force of this blow to open men's eyes and to silence certain vanities." Mr Belloc has here misunderstood, and therefore mistranslated, Major Grasset's allusion.[1]

General Staffs in time of modern war, when the nation becomes an army, are the most powerful organisms in the state, for almost every one must obey them. Their huge patronage gives them a hold even over legislature. The two-handed engine of deception, the censorship

[1] 'Precepts and Judgments of Marshal Foch,' by Major Grasset; translated by Hilaire Belloc. Chapman & Hall.

which conceals the truth, and propaganda which suggests the false, does what it likes with modern public opinion in time of war: people are far more uninstructed and misled by newspapers than ever they were by rumour in the past, before the spread of education had made it possible to induce people to believe anything by printing it. Propaganda can even persuade generals themselves that they are geniuses, who must be kept in place at all costs, however much they fail. This great two-handed engine the General Staffs also control, for military reasons. So the Staff ceases to exist for the nation: the nation lives for the benefit of the Staff. Victory or defeat ceases to be the prime interest; what matters it whether dear old Willie or poor old Harry shall command, or the Chantilly party score a point over the Boulevard des Invalides party. The Central Powers seem (as far as we can see from Count Czernin's 'Memoirs') to have suffered even more, and their Emperors and Chancellors to have been treated like valets; but tough and slippery as the General Staff might be with us, Mr Lloyd George was more so, and he kept war a function of politics, and victory as the end of the war.

But before the campaign of 1918 began, of the two parts of the plan of campaign which may be called that of Mr Lloyd George, Sir Henry Wilson, and Foch, one part had been published and betrayed, and the other part nullified by an intrigue.

The Allies therefore went back to the position they had been in the preceding autumn; and the consequences they had rightly anticipated and feared from that position unrolled themselves at once, and in an aggravated form: aggravated because only one part of their military plans was left intact, the extension of the British line. This portion of their design had been connected with the Executive War Board and the General Reserve; but though the reserve was never formed, and the Board never had any functions, the British line remained extended; and there from its extremity at Barisis northwards to Gouzeaucourt lay our Fifth Army, composed of only fourteen infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, strung out over 42 miles, on an average front of 6750 yards to each division: this was very thin. The Third Army, Byng's, immediately to the north, had one division on every 4200 yards.

The German divisions from the East were still flowing into France in March, but had at the beginning of the month not yet risen to the level of the Allies. On March 13, Ludendorff had 186 divisions at his disposal, of which 79 were in reserve: this gave him 1,370,000 rifles and 15,700 guns. But the 167 Allied divisions (58 in reserve) gave them 1,500,000 rifles and 16,400 guns. They still had the odds. On March 21, Ludendorff had 192 divisions, of which 85 were in

reserve; this made him equal in rifle strength, but perhaps still inferior in guns.

On Thursday, March 21, an attack was made in the morning on the Fifth and part of the Third British Armies: 64 German divisions, a total higher than the whole British army of 57, were set in motion against this sector. On that first day of battle against two-thirds of the line held by Gough's 14 divisions, 40 of these 64 German divisions were set in motion; and against one-fifth of the line held by him, Von Hutier brought off his Riga manœuvre. On the Wednesday this sector had had 4 German divisions in line; spread fan-wise behind them, with the farthest tip of the fan forty miles away, Von Hutier had 19 other divisions. These were brought up in the night between the 20th and the 21st, and the whole 23 were swung against a front, just in front of St Quentin, of 3 or 4 British divisions.

On this first day the casualties of the Fifth and Third British Armies were estimated at 40,000; but Gough, though his line was badly dented in three places, was by no means broken. The Germans were still "firmly held in the battle zone." The British troops, as the German communiqués announced, had resisted with their "usual tenacity." But no soldiers could struggle against this avalanche of numbers without reinforcements. All Gough's divisions had been engaged on the Thursday. Now Haig and Petain's armies were equal to Ludendorff's. They ought to have taken dispositions to come to the help of Gough, who held the weakest portion of their common line. This help could come either from the British or French.

The official despatches of Sir Douglas Haig do not seem to come from the pen of Sir Douglas himself, but from some subordinate, for their style is very different from his personal communications to Versailles or the War Cabinet, to which the historian of the war is again earnestly referred. The despatches are candid, but they have not altogether the plain candour of the Field-Marshal's character. Dealing with the Thursday fighting, the despatches say, "It became both possible and necessary to collect additional reserves from the remainder of my front and hurry them to the battle-field"; also, "My plans for collecting reserves from other parts of the British front were put into immediate execution." This is true; but it is not a complete story. During the course of the Thursday Gough appealed for help. He was told not to expect any British assistance for seventy-two hours—that is, until Sunday; and the first British reinforcements that reached the Fifth Army were a few brigades of the 8th Division, that had come all the way from St Omer, and which reached the battlefield late on Sunday afternoon.

Then there were the French, Petain with his 97 divisions who had had no serious fighting for nearly a year. "On different occasions, as the battle developed, I discussed with him the situation and the policy to be followed by the Allied armies," say the despatches. This is the courteous expression of a disagreeable fact. British G.H.Q. and the Grand Quartier-General did begin discussing how many French divisions Petain would give, but Petain maintained that this attack was not Ludendorff's main attack, which was to be towards Rheims, where a violent preliminary bombardment had taken place. On Saturday morning the two commanders-in-chief were still arguing, and Petain had not got further than granting 3 divisions. Meanwhile, on Friday morning, Gough's front had given way under the pressure of the enormous masses in front of him, and had begun to retreat, necessarily bringing backwards with him the Third Army, who had not been moved by the Germans. Mr Lloyd George, at the Saturday meeting of the War Cabinet, expressed his regret over the General Reserves so bitterly and emphatically that the secretary made a record of it.

On the afternoon of Saturday the 23rd, the commanders-in-chief finally agreed. "As the result of a meeting held in the afternoon of 23rd March," say the despatches, "arrangements were made for the French to take over as rapidly as possible the front held by the Fifth Army south of Péronne, and for the concentration of a strong force of French divisions on the southern portion of the battle front." But Ludendorff did not wait on these arrangements: Von Hutier's army had been sweeping forward during Friday and the morning of Saturday, driving before it Gough's army, which was losing its cohesion more and more. At midday on Saturday the Germans had found a gap at Ham and crossed the Somme, so that the sector it was decided on Saturday afternoon that the French should take over had already been occupied by the Germans when the decision was taken. Petain, however, did not hurry. Debeney, who was to command the "strong force of French divisions," was brought all the way from Lorraine and received his instructions on the Sunday afternoon, and did not reach the battlefield till Monday afternoon. Two French divisions, the 9th and 10th, did come into action on Gough's right on Saturday afternoon and another on Sunday, but they were carried away in the torrent. Only the "usual tenacity" of the British troops had kept Von Hutier till Saturday evening from reaching the objectives assigned to his troops for Thursday evening.

Still, during the week-end they drove on towards Amiens, pushing before them the shreds of Gough's army. If they reached Amiens the British and French armies were separ-

ated, for no real communication could be established between them on the lower reaches of the Somme below Amiens. Once separated, Ludendorff could take breath, and fling his mass of manœuvre of 100 divisions against each separately and in turn, either the reduced British pressed against the Channel ports, or the French with a vast front to cover.

During the week-end, therefore, at London, Paris, and Versailles, disastrous events were discussed and desperate resolutions taken: measures for the evacuation of Paris were considered. Clemenceau declared he would fight to the Pyrenees, and calculations were made whether it would be possible to re-embark and save the remainder of the British Army. But, however determined their statesmen might be, the two nations might have refused to make a further effort. The loss of Amiens might involve the loss of the war: everything hung upon it. Victory, therefore, was again within the grasp of the Germans.

Ludendorff proudly says the Germans at St Quentin did what no one else had done in the war. But even the Germans must be given their due, and he mistakes his own achievement. After resisting for nearly two years the attempts of Allied armies almost twice their size to break through their front, the Germans themselves broke through the Allied front with a bare equality of forces, and this with a plan of operations that was faulty. During the week the German Emperor gave Hindenburg a decoration that has only been given on one other single occasion in Prussian history, to Blücher after Waterloo: perhaps St Quentin is the greatest German victory of the war.

It is certainly the greatest defeat we have ever suffered in our history, measured by any standard. By Wednesday, 26th March, the units of Gough's army had officially been considered as having ceased to exist. Of the greatest British army ever assembled, then 57 divisions, between a third and a quarter had been wiped out. In Flanders and in Picardy, between 1st June 1917 and 30th April 1918, a period of eleven months, between 600,000 and 650,000 Englishmen became casualties. Never before, therefore, have Englishmen been slaughtered at such a rate and on such a scale; and at the end of this period the remainder were still on the brink of ruin, from which only their "usual tenacity" saved them.

The prognostics of Sir Henry Wilson and Foch in the preceding autumn were fulfilled as if by programme. The Germans, impelled by a single will, had in turn endeavoured to crush the separate armies of the Allies—the Italians at Caporetto, and the British at St Quentin—and very nearly succeeded. The system of three independent commanders-in-chief had been disastrous on the defensive for just the same reason they had predicted, that the help which one commander-

in-chief would give a colleague in danger would be either insufficient or too late, or both, and could only be decided by a supreme authority superior to them all. From the first week of March, when the plan of a General Reserve was abandoned, Gough's army was doomed. During the fortnight that preceded the battle no one on the immediate staff of Foch had any doubt that a catastrophe was inevitable. The future historian of the war can easily satisfy himself of the accuracy of their forecast. There are two documents, short and simple, which for this, as well as every other battle of the war, tell the story of the engagement at a glance, the order of battle of the Allied armies and the diary of G.H.Q.; these are worth for any battle all the mountain of documents that exist. The battle disposition for March 21 shows the Allied Reserves were so disposed that none of them could reach Gough in time to save him, and the diary of G.H.Q. that they did not.

It might have been far otherwise. The "terrible blow," as Major Grasset calls it, which Foch inflicted on the Germans at the Marne in July 1918, might just as well, and perhaps more effectively, have been dealt on the Somme in March. When in June Ludendorff crossed the Aisne and prepared to cross the Marne, Major Grasset says, Foch, then the Generalissimo and with power to do what he willed, "divined the error the enemy would make," that "he massed his reserves in the wooded hills of the region of Compiegne-Villers-Cotterets," that is to say, to the north of Paris. He points out that it was an irretrievable mistake of Ludendorff's to cross the Aisne with a "master of manœuvre" like Foch in possession of these wooded hills. But Ludendorff had committed no less an error in March (and Foch had anticipated it) when he pushed across the Somme. If Foch had been allowed, as he intended, to concentrate the bulk of his General Reserve in these same wooded hills of Compiegne, a mass of Allied divisions, issuing from them, would have fallen on the German flank in March with an even more deadly weight than in July. Foch in the summer only returned to his original March manœuvre, just as Ludendorff returned to his original error.

On Sunday, March 24, Haig himself appealed to London for a supreme authority over both armies. Mr Lloyd George sent over Lord Milner and Sir Henry Wilson, who at Doullens, on Tuesday, met M. Clemenceau: he still vacillated between Petain and Foch, but, as Major Grasset tells us, "on the proposal of the British Government," Foch was given authority to "co-ordinate the action of the two armies." Thus at the end of March Foch was put again in the position into which he had been placed at the end of January. To Mr Lloyd George we owe Sir Henry Wilson, and to Sir Henry Wilson, Foch.

Von Hutier, according to plan, was due in Amiens on

Sunday, but had been kept back by the "usual tenacity" of our troops, which (as Hindenburg says in his newly published 'Aus Meinem Leben') so often repaired the errors of their leaders. On the Tuesday, however, the Germans racing along the St Quentin-Amiens road, with their artillery and supplies left far behind, suffering from hunger, and with little strength left in them, were only 12,000 or 13,000 yards away from the town; the exact distance, therefore, within which the Germans came to winning the war may, perhaps, be exactly computed in yards: it is the space along this road which separated them from Amiens. The meeting at Doullens was not very sanguine of saving it, and Foch outlined his plans of defence in case Paris had to be abandoned and the British armies were driven back to the coast. On returning to London Sir Henry Wilson reported to the War Cabinet next day, not very hopefully, that the safety of Amiens depended on whether the French could collect sufficient troops there in time to defend the town. For south of the Somme, where along the main road the Germans were expending all the strength that was left in them to reach it, there was nothing left but fragments of the Fifth Army, broken by five days continuous unrelieved fighting and retreat. As Major Grasset says, a leader of less steely determination than Foch would probably have considered the situation hopeless. But this same old gentleman, now sixty-seven years old, who had snatched the prize from the Germans in 1914 in Lorraine and Champagne, just when it was in their grasp, was to do so again in Picardy in 1918, when again they had almost reached it.

He was only appointed towards the middle of the day on Tuesday. But at a quarter to five, a few hours after his appointment, he managed to get through to Debeney on the telephone; he now had authority to command. He at once ordered him to take all his troops out of the line farther south on a front of six miles, risk leaving a gap there, and send them up in front of Amiens. Against these, on the Wednesday, the last effort of the spent German wave broke itself.

So Foch, as soon as he was given a chance, found in himself at once, then, as before in 1914, the means of retrieving the faults and errors of other leaders, and so saved them, but only just, on the edge of ruin. Within six months of the day when he was given the desperate task of commanding armies defeated and pressed back to positions of the most imminent disaster, those same armies under his leadership were thundering victoriously at the gates of the Hindenburg Line, the safeguard and the symbol of German domination, and the leaders of the invincible German hosts who had awed Europe for half a century and very nearly overwhelmed it, had decided upon unconditional surrender.

THE LOSS OF THE *SAPPHO*.

"Hail, snow and ice, which, praise the Lord: I've met them at their work,
An' wished we had anither route, or they anither kirk."

—RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE last of the cargo had been hoisted on shore, the hatches were all covered and secured, and the Chief Officer gave a sigh of relief as he left the deck and hurried into the welcome warmth of the saloon. It was terribly cold outside. Winter had come unusually early, and with quite unlooked-for severity. For the last fortnight the thermometer had not stood above zero, and had often been 20° below, and now in the first week of December 1915 the river at Arkhangel was covered with two feet of ice.

"Thank God that's over at last," he exclaimed. "I don't think I could have stood another day of it myself, and I'm pretty sure half the crew would have chucked their hands in if it had gone on much longer. Working cargo is no joke in this sort of weather, and four or five of them had their ears frost-bitten this afternoon."

The Captain, to whom these remarks were addressed, put down the book he had been reading, and rose from his chair.

"You can certainly thank God you've finished," he replied, "because we're just in time to get away and save wintering here. We are to be ready to go down the river with the last batch of homeward bound ships at 9 A.M. to-morrow; they've just brought me my orders."

"The Lord be praised," interposed the Chief Engineer piously; "it's the best bit of news I've heard for two months or more."

"How are we off for bunkers?" said the Captain, addressing the last speaker; "my orders are to call in for coal at Kola Inlet if we are short."

The Engineer smiled. "I reckon we needn't suspect the Lords of the Admiralty of trying to make puns, but I'm inclined to think we shall be coaling at Kola all right in about ten days time, as we shan't have enough to get home. We've got enough for ten days, that's all."

"What are the latest reports of the ice in the Gorla, sir?" asked the Chief Officer.

"All the other ships are believed to have got through safely without much trouble," replied the Captain; "and the Russians say there ought not to be any quantity there for at least a fortnight. I'm more frightened of those blinking mines than I am of the ice, as all the trawlers have had to stop sweeping for the rest of the year."

"Well, anyhow, thank God we're off," said the Chief

Officer, "and may I never see this perishing place again. My next trip will be to the Indian Ocean if I can possibly manage it."

Next day the *Sappho* joined a procession of four or five ships of various sizes, who were slowly following the leading ice-breaker down the river. There were constant stoppages and delays, and the thirty miles to the Bar took the whole day and part of the night; but it was safely accomplished without serious accidents. Quite a number of British ships were passed in the river, lying at different unloading stations or waiting for berths, and the crew of the *Sappho* exchanged greetings as they passed with the less fortunate and envious crews who were destined to spend the next five months in the darkness and cold of an Arctic winter.

"A merry Christmas," shouted the Captain to a friend whom he recognised on the bridge of a big ammunition-carrier which they passed close at hand.

"Thanks, old chap; I'm expecting it. Bully beef and melted snow is about all we've got to be merry on. You're all right; you'll be just about home in time. Good luck," and the ships separated in the dusk.

Soon after passing the Bar the ice thinned very considerably, and before long the little group of ships were able to proceed on their way independently, the change from fresh to salt water being largely responsible for this. The weather was still bitterly cold, and a fresh northerly wind was blowing, with occasional snow-showers.

Before very long clear water was encountered, and by the morning of the second day the *Sappho* was the last of the little batch of ships, and there was nothing to be seen of her companions except an occasional patch of smoke far ahead between the snow-squalls.

The *Sappho* at her best was not a fast ship, but now, in her light condition, and with the necessity of husbanding her coal, she was not able to make more than three or four knots in a strong wind. However, she was making progress, and the ice was left behind; and though no one on board looked forward to a pleasant yachting trip, still everybody realised that things might have been very much worse, and that they had a great deal to be thankful for.

There was very little sea running, and the ship made good weather of it, though a certain amount of spray kept washing over the forepart of the ship, which froze solid almost immediately it reached the deck. Everything was soon covered with ice, creating a weird and rather ghostly effect in the twilight. The sun was only above the horizon for about an hour at noon, and the remaining twenty-three hours were divided up between about five hours of twilight and eighteen of darkness.

Early in the morning of the third day the wind died away, and before long the ship entered a dense curtain of fog or "frost smoke." It was literally impossible to see across the bridge, and the Captain decided, much against his will, to ease down to dead slow. He was now nearing the narrow part of the Gorla or strait connecting the White Sea and Barent's Sea, and his position was too uncertain to risk steaming his full eight knots in such a blanket of fog. Such fogs are the dread of all navigators in these latitudes at this time of year. They are caused by clouds of steam rising from the comparatively warm water, and occur when the temperature of the air is about 35° colder than that of the surface water. They are usually low-lying, and in some cases high land or the masts of another ship will be seen standing out above them; but this can never be relied upon.

About dusk that evening the mist suddenly cleared and speed was increased at once. The Captain paced the bridge for some time, and at last sent down a message to the engineer on watch below to "let her go," but received a message in reply to say she had been going full speed for some time. The sea was like a mill pond, and all around the ship in the closing darkness could be seen thousands of small brown circles rather like innumerable jelly-fish. For some minutes the Captain peered anxiously over the side of the bridge intently watching these brown circles. At that moment the noise of the ash-hoist greeted his ear, and hurrying over to the other side of the bridge he stood and watched the fireman unhook his first bucket of ashes from the hoist and carry them to the ash-shoot.

Over the side they went, but instead of disappearing with a splash they slid out into a little heap and remained there. They moved slowly aft, and the next bucketful which was thrown overboard took up a position a few yards ahead of the first lot on the ice. There was no doubt about it whatever: the ship was crawling through newly-forming ice with rapidly decreasing speed, and about an hour later she stopped altogether. The telegraph was put to "stop" and the Captain left the bridge to confer with the Chief Engineer. It was very soon decided that it was useless to waste precious coal in steaming, so fires were banked and the ship lay motionless through the rest of the night.

It was a gorgeous night, and the Aurora Borealis, or northern lights, were visible until after midnight in all their splendour. The whole of the northern part of the horizon as far as the zenith was a mass of shimmering light of constantly changing colours and intensity. It was as if hundreds of searchlights were playing on the sky, each light being capable of changing its colour from red or gold to white at will. It was bitterly cold, and the ship's thermometer had

altogether ceased to record, as the mercury had vanished into the bulb.

The fourth day dawned clear and bright, and as daylight appeared the land on the north shore of the Gorla could be plainly seen, and the ship's position was estimated to be about fifteen miles from the land. The ice was beautifully transparent, but much more solid than the evening before, and the yellow circles or blotches of the forming stage had disappeared. An attempt to move the ship ahead or astern proved quite abortive, and the fires were again banked to await a more favourable opportunity. Not a living thing of any sort was in sight, and the day passed drearily and without incident.

The Captain ordered a careful survey to be made of the provisions on board, and this revealed the alarming fact that there was only about a fortnight's, or at the most three weeks', supply, and orders were given that the most drastic economy was to be exercised.

During the evening the weather changed for the worse, and the wind was soon blowing hard from the westward, accompanied by snow-squalls. The effect of the wind was soon noticeable, as the ice commenced to move and crack in all directions, and by the morning of the fifth day the whole aspect of affairs had undergone a great change. The smooth surface of transparent ice had changed to an irregular surface of white ice, and there was obviously considerable pressure going on. A considerable mass of rather older floe-ice to windward was being driven towards the ship by the wind. Periodically one could see quite a large piece of ice stand right up on end and then slide down again on top of another piece, the two being rapidly frozen together into one piece of twice the original thickness.

The engines were tried again and worked for some time, but a few cables were all that were achieved as a result of several hours' steaming, and the effort was again reluctantly abandoned.

A careful look-out was kept for any signs of another ship, and the Captain was constantly sending up to the mast-head to scan the horizon for smoke, which might turn out possibly to be an ice-breaker which had been sent to assist ships. But nothing was sighted, though a careful watch was kept; the temperature prevented any one remaining in such an exposed position for very long at a time.

The pressure on the ship became slowly worse; the ice on the windward side seemed to be gradually climbing up the side, and a lot of noise and grinding was going on.

There could be no doubt at all that the ship was drifting with the ice, but fortunately she was drifting the right way, and there was just a chance that in a day or two she might find herself free.

The Captain was very anxious, but he kept a smiling face through it all, and it was only to the Chief Officer and Chief Engineer that he unburdened himself in the privacy of his cabin. "If we are here for another ten days things will become desperate," he remarked; "but I have every hope that a change of wind and a rise in the temperature may clear this ice away altogether before that."

"We ought to have plenty of coal left to get us as far as Yukanskie, or even Kola Inlet, even by then: we're not burning much now," said the Engineer; "but I can't see how we can hope to be clear of this in ten days, or even ten weeks. It looks to me as if we shall be here till April, or rather the ship will: we shall all be dead of starvation before Christmas."

"Yes, I'm afraid it's a bad look-out for us," said the Chief Officer. "I'd gladly exchange now with any of those ships tied up alongside Solombolo dockyard, even if it did mean that we had to assist the Russians in their favourite pastime of propping up the jetty for about six months."

"I wonder how the other ships ahead of us are getting on," said the Engineer; "if only we had wireless we might get help from one of them."

"The best hope for us is that they may send an ice-breaker to make sure that no one has been caught," said the Captain; "but we can't rely on it, and I fear we shall have to trust to ourselves to get out of this mess."

For four more days the ship drifted slowly to the north-eastward, and the ice conditions became gradually worse. The pressure varied greatly, depending on whether the tidal stream was with or against the wind, and the surface of the ice was constantly changing its appearance.

It was gradually becoming evident to every one on board that the ship was caught in the winter ice, and that nothing short of a miracle could save her. She might last through the winter, or she might be crushed like an egg at any moment if the pressure became suddenly worse; but whatever ultimately happened to the ship, the fate of the men on board was bound to be decided before very long. There was only a fortnight's provisions on board, and in this temperature it was very difficult to maintain health and strength on reduced rations.

The land on the northern shore was generally visible during daylight, and it seemed to be getting gradually closer. On the tenth day the Captain reckoned they were not more than ten miles from the nearest point. The sailing directions were carefully consulted and the charts anxiously scanned, but no signs of a permanent village could be found nearer than Ponoi river, a distance of at least 100 miles

away. Even here it seemed doubtful if there was a certainty of finding any people as late on in the year as December, as the natives only reside in the fishing villages on the coast during the summer months, and retreat to winter quarters inland.

Consequently the chances of finding food and shelter on shore seemed very remote, and the men were entirely unequipped for a long journey exposed to the bitter cold winds which were blowing so persistently. The Captain decided that abandoning the ship must be a very last resort, and naturally the idea of leaving the ship was repugnant to every one.

During the forenoon of the eleventh day out the mate went up to the cross-trees armed with his glasses, and after a few minutes careful scrutiny he hailed the Captain, who was pacing up and down the bridge, to say he could plainly make out a large steamer close in under the land. There was the very greatest excitement on board at this news, and every one who had a pair of glasses or a telescope was soon busily engaged in trying to make her out. She was visible from the deck, once she had been sighted, though very difficult to pick out with the snow-covered land as a background.

There were many surmises as to what her name was, what line she belonged to, and how long out she was from Arkhangel, and quite a number of wagers were laid and taken as to her size, line, &c. Every one was agreed on one point, and that was that she was not making any way through the ice, and that she had no smoke coming out of her funnels. She had all the appearances of being an ordinary good-sized British tramp, heading about north-east, and was not more than eight or nine miles away.

The Captain ordered the largest ensign on board to be hoisted, and the distant signal for a vessel in distress was flown at the mast-head, but no signs of a reply could be distinguished. The whistle was blown in the hopes that the steam would be visible, even though the sound could not be heard, and the firemen produced some gorgeous black smoke at the expense of a little coal, but no notice was taken. By three o'clock in the afternoon it was dusk and the ship was lost sight of; a couple of hours later several rockets were fired, but still no notice of any sort was taken, and to all appearances the ship seemed to be deserted.

The Captain was confident that she was a Russian ship, and stated that he believed Russian sailors behaved in the same way that bears behave during the winter months, and remained in their bunks for weeks together, which would account for no look-out being kept. The Chief Officer thought that probably they were Russians and that the crew were all below, but thought this was more likely due to a plentiful supply of vodka on board than to any imitation

of the habits of the national animal. The Chief Engineer was confident that she was a British ship; in fact he was sure she was a Tyne-built ship, but he could not explain why she took no notice of any signals.

The whole of the next day was spent in endeavouring to attract the stranger's attention, and the boatswain rigged up a magnificent canvas ball to use as a distant signal, but no reply could be distinguished. Unfortunately there was no powerful telescope on board, and the Captain's night glasses were not sufficiently powerful to make out anything on board with any degree of accuracy, but several of the more sanguine among the members of the crew were prepared to swear that a ball had been hoisted at the foremast-head just before dark.

One fact, however, was patent to all: the stranger was not moving at the same rate as the *Sappho*, and if the present rate of drift continued the two ships would be as close as they were ever likely to be on the following day, and after that they would commence to separate. The explanation for this was not very difficult; the strange vessel was close into the land, out of the main tidal stream, and not nearly so exposed to the drift caused by the wind, which was still blowing freshly, and the sailing directions and charts gave the rate of the tidal stream in the offing as anything up to four knots.

After dark that evening the Captain summoned all hands and proceeded to put the matter before them. He explained that the food supply would last little over a week, and that consequently things were very serious; on the other hand, there was nothing to be gained by getting in a panic. He pointed out that they would have to abandon the ship very shortly; it seemed quite feasible to make their way over the ice to the strange ship, and in the event of their finding she was as badly off for food as they were themselves, they would just have to go on ashore and try and make the nearest Lap settlement. He was of opinion that the next day would be the best day to choose, as the ships would be as close to each other as they were ever likely to be, and delay only aggravated the food problem. He called for a vote as to whether they should decide to abandon the ship next day or not. Nearly every one present voted that this was the best thing to do, and the necessary preparations were accordingly decided upon.

Every one was busy until well on in the night, and there was little sleep for any one. Large staves of wood were cut for each man to use as sort of alpenstocks, the whole of the available food supplies were collected and divided into equal portions, and all the available blankets, canvas, &c., was made into improvised arctic clothing. The Captain was busy collecting a few valuable papers he

wished to take with him, and carefully destroying all confidential documents which might be of value if by chance they should happen to fall into the enemy's hands later on.

It was a terrible responsibility for him, and he felt the abandonment of his ship as only a seaman could. He perhaps alone realised the risks they were running, and foresaw the difficulties of the proposed journey. The crew as a whole were cheerful, and welcomed the change from inaction and anxiety from which they had all been suffering during the past few days.

When the next day dawned the wind had shifted more to the northward, and dense snow was falling, with very rare intervals. The other ship was not in sight at all, and after waiting until nearly noon the Captain reluctantly decided to postpone starting till next day. This was most unfortunate, as all preparations had been made; it was difficult to avoid feeling that bad luck was dogging them, and a gloom was cast over all the ship's company.

The ice commenced packing badly during the evening, several large lumps were forced right on to the weather side of the deck, and the ship groaned and moved considerably under the pressure. Every one realised that the ship might be overwhelmed by the ice at any time, and there was no doubt that abandonment was the only possible course, and the sooner the better.

The next day, the fourteenth out from Arkhangel, the weather was clear; and though there was still a good deal of wind and an unpleasant amount of movement in the ice, the abandonment was decided upon. All final preparations were completed, and as soon as it was light the accommodation-ladder was lowered on to the ice, and the crew of over twenty men silently left the ship and started on their long trek. The Captain, in accordance with the immemorial custom of the sea, was the last man to leave the ship, and in a long straggling line a course was shaped for the distant steamer.

If any of my readers have ever seen pack-ice, either in reality or even on the films, they will have gleaned some idea of what walking on it means even under favourable conditions. Add to the obvious difficulties a constantly moving surface due to pressure, a thick layer of snow "overall" concealing holes and cracks, a temperature of 50° of frost with a blinding wind, and remember that the men were totally unprepared for an Arctic trip on the ice and quite inadequately clad.

The outcome of this gallant effort at self-preservation was, alas! almost a foregone conclusion. It would be almost irreverent to the memories of these brave men to attempt to picture this tragedy on the ice which occurred within ten miles of Cape Danilov on that December day in 1915. Let

bare facts suffice, and let those who have sufficient imagination fill in the missing details.

Of the score and more gallant men who left the ill-fated *Sappho*, only four reached their destination; and when these four frost-bitten perished men managed by almost superhuman efforts to clamber on board, they found she was a deserted wreck lying hard and fast on shore on an outlying reef of rocks, and that she had been abandoned as a total loss some months before.

One can picture the little group of survivors getting smaller and smaller, as one after another succumbed to the cold; and one can imagine the hopes of the four as they got within hailing distance of their goal, and their bitter disappointment at receiving no answer to their shouts for help as they got close up to the ship. And one can share their feelings as they at last managed to climb on board to find everything a wilderness, with no food and no warmth, and hardly any shelter. Nothing but an indomitable British pluck can have saved them from absolute despair, but they never gave in. Coal and wood was found, a fire was lighted, and for a short time they stayed there; but here again we will stick to facts. Only two of these four men managed to make their way ashore, and by this time they must have given up all hope of safety, and decided to go on till they dropped.

But the last act in this tragedy was the most wonderful: that very day the two survivors were picked up by a group of Laplanders, who were making their way south to their winter quarters with their reindeer sleighs. The writer has credited British pluck with having enabled these men to survive the shock of finding their supposed goal of refuge nothing but a deserted wreck; he can only attribute this miraculous salvation to Providence. He believes these Laps were the last group to go south that year; they were unusually late, and travelling by a different route to the one usually taken.

Without a moment's hesitation, with no thought of payment or reward, a party of these good Samaritans retraced their steps to the northward, and conveyed these two sole survivors in their sleighs for a distance of about 150 miles over one of the most desolate countries in the world, and handed them over to a British man-of-war which was wintering in Yukanskie harbour.

The *Sappho* was never seen again.

H. A. LE F. H.

THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

BY THE DEAN OF EXETER.

It is said that there was once a Professor of History at Oxford who, when reminded that the Pilgrim Fathers had "landed on Plymouth Rock," expressed a wish that Plymouth Rock had "landed" on them. Far be it from us to defend the petulance of the professor, yet it may have been in part excusable. An excessive and indiscriminating hero-worship—the beatification in sermons and speeches of the Pilgrim Fathers as persecuted saints and champions of religious freedom—may have provoked the outburst which we have recorded; and as, during the present year, it is by no means improbable that similar causes may lead to similar outbursts, it may not be out of place to attempt a brief and impartial estimate of the men who played such an important part, though at the time it seemed but a humble one, in the history of the world three hundred years ago.

In the first place, however, it may be necessary to say a word on the term "Pilgrim Fathers." To whom is this title applied? That it is applied in the first place to those who made the famous voyage in the *Mayflower* will not be denied, and by some it is confined to them. But there are those who would include other emigrants who went out a few years later and became the founders of the colony of Massachusetts, and there is so much in common to the two parties that we may feel justified in including both under the title of the "Pilgrim Fathers."

To begin, then, with the emigrants of the *Mayflower*, our great authority is the 'History of the Plymouth Settlers,' written by William Bradford, who was for many years the Governor of the colony. Bradford's book is one of deep interest. We have in him a man of sincere and fervent piety, with a profound sense of providential guidance, filled with unfailing faith and courage. At the same time he is equally conspicuous for narrow and violent prejudices. To him the Puritans, or more especially the "Separatists," are the true Church of God, and the party who "endeavoured to uphold the right worship of God and the discipline of Christ in the Church according to the simplicity of the Gospel, and without the mixture of men's inventions; while the other party, the episcopal, endeavoured to maintain the episcopal dignity after the popish manner, and tried with lordly and tyrannic power to persecute the poor servants of God." This is the description of the reformers at

Frankfort during the reign of Mary. But Bradford's book, in spite of his prejudices, remains an impressive and dignified record of the adventures and sufferings of the first pilgrims.

The original home of these pilgrims is to be found in certain villages of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and Notts. Here, in the reign of Elizabeth, there had gathered several "Separatist" congregations. It is necessary, of course, to distinguish between the "Separatists" and the great mass of the Puritans. The Puritans desired to remain in the National Church, but to reform it after their own liking: to purge it of superstitious ceremonies, &c.; but the Separatists regarded the Church as so completely tainted by the inclusion of evil men in its fold, or those whom they considered evil, that they decided to "separate" themselves altogether from its communion and to form themselves into select bodies of saints which they regarded as the true Church of God. Both Elizabeth and James looked upon these societies with great suspicion and tried to suppress them. That they were persecuted sometimes with great severity is undoubtedly true; but it is equally true that persecution was the fashion of the age, and that had the Separatists been in power they would have persecuted their opponents with no less relentless severity.

Among the Notts villages there is one, Scrooby, where the Archbishops of York once had a country seat. At the beginning of the seventeenth century this house was occupied by William Brewster, formerly Secretary to Davison, a Secretary of State in Elizabeth's reign, but now postmaster of the village. He was a stern Puritan, and was in the habit of "sitting under" Richard Clifton, rector of Babrook, hard by Scrooby, when, after the Hampton Court Conference, it was determined by James and his advisers to enforce "conformity" far more strictly than before. Clifton resigned his living, and in 1606 became the pastor of a little flock that gathered together in Brewster's house at Scrooby. To them was soon added another minister, John Robinson, once of Norwich, a man of high intellectual and spiritual gifts, who was destined to play no small part in the proceedings of the "Pilgrim Fathers."

There was, however, no peace for the Scrooby congregation, and before long they had determined to seek in a foreign country the liberty which they could not find at home. Their eyes naturally turned towards Holland, and to Holland they resolved to go. But even this was not easy, for it was illegal to leave the country without a royal licence, and it was only after some thrilling adventures that they at length found themselves in Amsterdam. There was already in Amsterdam a

church of Separatists which, thanks to the quarrelsome nature of Mr John Smith, who had emigrated thither from Gainsborough, was rent by divisions, some of them of an unedifying character. Fearing to be involved in these disputes, Mr Robinson wisely determined to move to Leyden, and in this "fair and beautiful city of a sweet situation, made famous by its university," he and his friends and disciples lived for about eleven years. During this period they endured many privations and sufferings, which they bore with courage and patience. But as time went on it became more and more clear that the community would never flourish in its present condition. Some of their friends in England shrank from joining a society in which life was so difficult. As their children grew up also many of them preferred to seek their fortunes elsewhere, while the "temptations of the city" seduced others from the straight path. There were many complaints too of "Sabbath-breaking," which probably only meant that the Dutch kept Sunday in a more Christian and sensible fashion than the Separatists. It became clear that they must seek a new country where, free from the perils and pollutions, they might found a new community to the glory of God.

Whither, then, should they go? The question was long and anxiously debated. At length they determined on America. There were two companies, the Virginian and the Plymouth, concerned in American colonisation, and with one of these it would be necessary to enter into negotiations. Eventually it was the Virginian company from whom they obtained in 1619 a patent which authorised them to a settlement near the mouth of the Hudson, a patent which eventually turned out to be useless. So, too, it was necessary to win the assent of the King. James referred the case to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, and eventually the permission was given. The Pilgrims' request for liberty of conscience in America was not indeed formally granted, but they were given to understand that if they behaved well they need not fear interference. The consent of the bishops was perhaps the more readily obtained as the Separatists had already sent from Leyden "Seven Articles," one of which distinctly acknowledged the authority of the bishops. Their true attitude to the bishops is perhaps better revealed in a note which Bradford appended in 1646 to his 'History of the Plymouth Settlers':—

"Little did I think that the downfall of the Bishops with their courts, canons, and ceremonies had been so near when first I began these scribbled writings, this was about the year 1630, or that I should have lived to see and hear it. But it is the

> Lord's doing and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The tyrannous bishops are ejected, their courts dissolved, their canons forceless, their service cashiered, their ceremonies useless and despised. Their proud and profane supporters and cruel defenders (the bloody papists and wicked atheists and their malignant consorts) are marvellously overthrown. But who has done it? Even He who sitteth on the White Horse who is called faithful and true, and judgeth and fighteth righteously. Hallelujah!"

The passage is characteristic of the Separatists, who could only see in their opponents the enemies of the Lord, "bloody" and "wicked." Had Bradford lived until the Restoration he would presumably have been less satisfied with the ways of Providence.

But we must return to our Pilgrims. It would be wearisome to relate in detail the various obstacles of one sort and another which had to be overcome. They were not men to be easily daunted, and at length in August 1620 they set sail in the *Mayflower*, a vessel of 180 tons, which was accompanied by a smaller vessel, the *Speedwell*. But disappointment awaited them. The *Speedwell* sprung a leak and eventually had to be left behind at Plymouth; the *Mayflower* pursued her solitary way.

Of the voyage we have a vivid and interesting account in Bradford's 'History.' Everywhere one is impressed by his profound sense of divine guidance, though unfortunately it is accompanied by a too eager readiness to see the hand of God in the misfortunes which happen to his enemies, or those of whom he disapproves. He is never afraid to reveal the secrets of the Most High. Thus he gives as a special example of God's Providence the death on board of a "very violent and profane young man" who abused the Pilgrims. As it happened, another young man, "servant to Samuel Fuller," also died; but this is not regarded as "a special example of God's Providence." He also notices elsewhere that a certain Mr Blackwell, who had received the Archbishop's blessing, died soon afterwards, and concludes that "if such events follow the Archbishop's blessing, happy are they who miss it." The death of his own wife, who fell overboard and was drowned, was accompanied by no similar reflections.

It was a stormy and tempestuous passage; but at length, on November 9th—nine weeks after leaving Plymouth—they caught sight of land, the low shore of Cape Cod, not seventy miles from the place where they had hoped to settle. Accordingly the ship was headed round in a southerly direction, and they made for the mouth of the Hudson. Here, however, off Sandy Point, the rough water made it necessary to return north-

wards and put into Cape Cod harbour. But they at once found themselves face to face with a difficulty. They were outside the limits of the Virginian Company, and their patent was useless. It was impossible at the time to communicate with the Northern Company, in whose territories they now were, and, in the circumstances, they determined to form themselves into a civil body politic, and chose John Carver as their Governor. Immediately afterwards a small party was set on shore to explore the country, and succeeded in finding and bringing back some Indian corn. Meanwhile a shallop which they had brought with them was being got ready, and in her another exploring party set forth, and reported in favour of a spot near the mouth of the Parret river. The Pilgrims, however, were not satisfied; and on December 6th the shallop, manned by "a few principal men and some sailors," made a third expedition, which, after encounters with Indians and much suffering from the cold, ended in the famous "landing on Plymouth Rook" on December 11th. "On Monday," says Bradford, "they sounded the harbour and found it fit for shipping; and marching inland they found several cornfields and little running brooks, a place as they supposed fit for settlement." With this news they returned to their chief, and on December 16th the *Mayflower* cast anchor in Plymouth Bay.

But their troubles were not over. They had landed in winter; and though it was a comparatively mild one, their sufferings were great, and many of their number died. There were difficulties with the London merchants who had financed the expedition, while certain "False brethren" severely tried the patience of Governor Bradford and his colleagues. Then there were also the Indians, who naturally regarded the newcomers with a certain amount of suspicion; and though on the whole the colonists dealt fairly and tactfully with them, they occasionally adopted measures which drew a protest from John Robinson at Leyden. "Concerning the killing of these poor Indians, of which we heard at first by rumour and since by more definite report, oh! how happy a thing it had been if you had converted some before you killed any. . . . Necessity of killing so many I cannot see." Some years later, in 1637, the differences with the Pequot Indians and the settlers in Connecticut led to a war which is vividly described by Bradford. The enemy were mostly in a fort, which the colonists and the friendly Indians surrounded. The fort was set on fire. "It burnt their bowstrings, and made their weapons useless, and they that escaped the fire were slain by the sword, some hewn to pieces, others run through with rapiers, so that they were quickly despatched, and very

few escaped. It is believed that there were about 400 killed. It was a fearful sight to see them frying in the fire, with streams of blood quenching it; the smell was horrible, but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave praise to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them," &c. No doubt the smell of frying Indians was as the odour of a sweet sacrifice in the courts of heaven.

It is interesting to notice the system of industry adopted by the colonists. At first it was a pure communism, but this was a failure, and, in Bradford's opinion, "proves the emptiness of the theory of Plato." Then each household was allotted a patch of cornland; the grass-land was divided into common fields, where all had right of pasturage, and a second portion, where individuals had a temporary right of occupancy—a system almost identical with that which prevailed in England in the Middle Ages. The industry of the colonists assured success, and their material property rapidly increased. In a few years, in addition to the original settlement, two new townships had been established, and a representative assembly was formed of delegates from the three towns. There were religious disputes and dissensions which Bradford laments, fearing that "they will be the ruin of New England, at least of the churches of God there"; but when he died in 1657 the colony for which he had done so much was firmly established.

While the Pilgrim settlement was still struggling against adverse circumstances, in the year 1629, six prominent English Puritans, who had already formed a fishing station in Massachusetts Bay, obtained a grant of land from the New England Company, and a royal charter incorporating the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay, and a fleet was sent out with 350 emigrants, including three ministers of religion. This movement appears to have owed its original impulse to John White, the Puritan Vicar of Dorchester; among the partners was Roger Endicott; and the first Governor of the new colony was a Suffolk squire, John Winthrop.

These men, it must be understood, were Puritans, but not Separatists. They regarded themselves as members of the Church of England, and indeed its only true members, anxious to purge away superstitious ceremonies, and to bring her to what they regarded as a purer condition. Loudly professing to be the victims of persecution, they soon proved that in temper and spirit they and their "persecutors" were at one. Among the members of the Council were two, John and Samuel Browne, "men of estates, and men of parts in the place," who were dissatisfied at the disuse of the Prayer Book by the ministers whom they had brought out,

as well as of the accustomed services of Baptism and Holy Communion. Accordingly they ventured to conduct services at which the Prayer Book was used. At this time Endicott was acting as Governor, and he lost no time in dealing with these renegades. Summoning them before him, he told them that New England was no place for them, and promptly sent them back to their mother-country.

Another instance of the settlers' regard for liberty is to be found in the regulations made for securing the full privileges of citizenship. The political function was limited to men of religious character united in Church fellowship. Church membership thus became a necessary qualification for citizenship. In short, there was a "Test Act" of a particularly offensive kind. Moreover, the power of the State was called in to enforce the decisions of the Church by fine or imprisonment. It was a system admirably fitted for the production of hypocrites.

Nor were the stiff Churchmen who contended for the Prayer Book the only victims of persecution. In 1631 a Welshman, Roger Williams, was chosen minister of Salem. Contrary to the sentiments of the Puritans in general, he held and taught that the secular power should not meddle with religion. For these opinions he was banished. A little later a clergyman, John Wheelwright, and his sister, Mrs Hutchinson, were also banished for teaching doctrines which slightly differed from those of the majority. But more was to follow. In 1656 two Quaker women who had landed were arrested and imprisoned, and had the Governor, Endicott, not been absent would also have been scourged. Then appeared eight more members of the sect. The treatment of Quakers was a question in which all the New England Colonies were not of one mind; but when others faltered, Massachusetts had no weak scruples. An Act imposing penalty of death in cases of extreme obstinacy was passed, and three Quakers were actually hanged.

It is unnecessary and indeed impossible to dwell at length on the various laws punishing "Sabbath-breaking" and similar offences. A distinguished Nonconformist has recently written concerning the Drink Question, "Congratulations to the land that has rid itself of this deadly curse, and has passed a law of Total Prohibition. This is part of the harvest of which the Mayflowers carried the seed-basket."

He is right. It does not appear, indeed, that the Plymouth Colony practised persecution; for, so far as one can judge, they had no trouble with dissenters from their own doctrines; but the contempt for liberty which is displayed by the "Prohibitionists," and the endeavour to establish by force a narrow

moral ideal, are quite in accord with the temper of their spiritual ancestors. We must give the Puritans their due. Who can fail to admire their high qualities: their patience and persistence, their firm adherence to the moral standard which they set before themselves, their zeal for righteousness such as they conceived it? The value of Puritanism as an element in the national character, both here and in America, cannot be denied, even though one has to set on the other side the hard and bitter temper, the stunted sense of beauty, the lack of sweetness and light, the intellectual obscurantism which has brought with it so many disastrous consequences; but in the face of the coming celebrations which threaten to extol the Pilgrim Fathers as champions of liberty, it is well to understand that they cared not a straw about liberty for any one but themselves, and that the notion that New England was, or wished to be thought, a home of spiritual freedom is, in the words of one historian, a "grotesque delusion."

FROM THE OUTPOSTS.

RETRIBUTION AT NIANAZAI.

BY RAYMOND A. COULSON.

THE pirates of Nianazai were bad men, and it was not merely in defiance of Regulations, but also in neglect of what most people would call decent feeling, that they committed their depredations. But they are all dead now, and buried on the scene of their crimes. Which should satisfy the sternest moralists, even those of the Striking Force who found themselves bereft of their fresh-meat ration because of sheep "lost at Nianazai," deprived of ice because of ice-bags "become unserviceable at Nianazai," and once robbed even of rum because of a rum-cask "damaged while on service" at Nianazai.

Lieutenant Robertson, musing over the wooden cross and crudely painted inscription which was earth's last tribute to Captain Dempsey-Kelley, felt no wrath. He remembered their merry open-handed mess, and the dinner they gave him on his way up. Hospitable they were, like most cheerful rogues. It was only a few months ago, and already the paint was fading on the crosses. A few more months of that weather would render it illegible. Which was possibly why the abstraction that signs itself "Adminstaff" had addressed Lieutenant Robertson by telegram to his present task of making a plan of the Nianazai graveyard.

It was a sound, sensible graveyard, with plenty of room for expansion. Dempsey-Kelley himself had laid it out, and built the walls to keep the jackals off.

He had been at this very work, orienting the Mahommedan graves in conjunction with the regimental Mullah, when Robertson first came up. The temperature that day was well in the hundred-and-teens. "Hot, isn't it?" said Dempsey-Kelley as Robertson staggered past, too done for more than the faintest nod. "Come to the mess and have a drink."

Robertson collapsed into the one long chair. "A chap of the convoy died—heat-stroke—on the way up to-day," he offered as excuse for his exhaustion.

"Oh, yes?" said the other indifferently. "You'll find it cooler up above."

Robertson, who was then recently out from England, lay back mopping his face and wondering vaguely at the spectacle presented by this pallid Captain, whose clothing consisted of a shirt (entirely unbuttoned), shorts, grey army socks, and native sandals. And then his reflections were

interrupted by a familiar but incredible tinkle.

"Ice?" he gasped. A large black bottle with a red label appeared. "Beer!" He regarded his host with wonder. Water, warm and probably muddy, was the best he had expected. Ice, he had been informed at the advanced base, was more precious than rubies. And beer!

"We wangle it along," said Dempsey-Kelley. "Got pals in the transport. As for the ice, that's mostly intended for the blokes up above. But it's already come eighty miles on trotting camels when it gets here, and by the time it arrived where it's meant for, the bags would be quite empty. So it's much better to empty 'em here and avoid waste. Anyhow, they're 4000 feet higher than we are. Don't see what they need ice for." He stood up and sighed. "Damn this fever! Excuse me not drinking with you. I've got to go out into the sun again." He paused with his shaking hand on the tent-flap. "Better dine with us to-night. Call for tea when you want it."

He returned to his sepulchral task, leaving Robertson to thank his gods for the grace that permitted this scandalously dressed Captain to throw away ice and beer and dinners on a passing stranger. Because transport was the whole difficulty of that campaign, and supplies were cut to the minimum. Most Frontier expeditions are able to find or make at least one serviceable road. Here there was merely a river-bed, wherein the camels wore themselves sick over the shifting stones, or died of heat or simple sulks, or were drowned by spates or shot at long range by concealed tribesmen. So messes were not encouraged in luxury, and at the base Robertson had been warned by a strenuously-worded notice that he must carry his own rations and not expect casual hospitality at the posts on Line of Communications.

The officers of Nianazai were away at various labours, so he sat for two hours until his bearer and his tent arrived.

"Sahib, what *bundobast* for dinner?" asked Khuda Bux, his bearer.

"*Messkot men*," said Robertson, "but you'd better put my day's rations into the mess."

It was a little consideration that he found had been appreciated when he met them all that night. "A lot of chaps don't think of it," said Dempsey-Kelley (who, it appeared, was P.M.C.), "and we really do run a bit short with so many passing up and down."

Travis, the senior Captain, a gaunt and melancholy officer with the reputation of being able to ride through Regulations oftener and easier than any other man in Northern India, and said to have defeated British Army quartermasters four several times when handing over stores, was a shadowy and silent figure at the head of the table, but the others were lively enough despite their three months' broiling in this unwholesome

spot. Bob Andrews, a chubby boy who died of enteric the following week, was describing a mile of trout-stream he owned in Gloucestershire. "This is the first year I've missed the May-fly since I was sixteen," he said, in a manner that suggested a record of at least half a century broken at last.

Then there were the two brothers Forbes, and another officer whose name Robertson had forgotten. He scrutinised the crosses. Ah, yes! "Lieutenant John James Henfield—killed . . ." That was the man.

They had given him fresh mutton for dinner, potatoes, fried onions, and tinned tomatoes, caramel custard, ration cheese, and whisky—a wonderful meal. "You'll be pushing off about six next morning, I suppose," said Dempsey-Kelley. "I'll arrange for you to have an egg with your *chota hazri*. We've got a man bribed to scour the country for eggs and chickens."

They certainly did themselves and their guests amazingly well. At that time their notoriety was merely germinating. As he went on up the line Robertson heard references here and there to "those pirates at Nianazai"; very soon their misdeeds became gossip for the entire Force. Difficulties of supply were inevitable, but every little outpost whose full daily ration failed to arrive attributed the deficiency to theft at Nianazai. Forlorn company messes, reduced to half a tin of bully and one biscuit per man, would grimly toast "the pirates"—"Here's to hoping they're having a good time at Nianazai." Indeed, if Nianazai had looted, stolen, milked, consumed or otherwise made away with one-tenth of the total alleged against them, every one there must have been a globe of fat, whereas Robertson remembered them as particularly tough, leathery, and hard-exercised in aspect.

Such fighting as the Force achieved, though certainly uncomfortable, was done in green and comparatively cool country; but going to Nianazai was talked of as one would talk of going to Capri. The place achieved a romantic glamour as a den of thieves garnished with ever-flowing fountains of beer, enamelled meadows of tinned peaches, and ice in bucketfuls. It was said that every officer had a banana with his *chota hazri*.

Fashionable jests are extremely infectious, and Robertson, like many others who had enjoyed their hospitality, uttered his jibes at the Nianazai pirates as occasion arose. The news of Dempsey-Kelley's death silenced him for a while, for the first aspect and the personality of the man had struck his imagination. There had been one of the periodic attempts to ambush the upcoming convoy. Dempsey-Kelley, who was in charge of the escort over that particular section, had gathered the pack-animals into a side nullah which he had picketed above, when almost the last camel of all, resenting the hurry, had broken its nose-rope and, with

that mingling of speed, determination, and absent-mindedness that only camels can achieve, made off in a direct line towards the enemy.

It happened to be loaded with five boxes each containing 1120 rounds of small-arm ammunition in chargers. At that time the whole resistance of the tribesmen was beginning to collapse owing to lack of ammunition. Cartridges, always sacred on the frontier, were worth two rupees a round. Apart from the moral disaster, the loss to the enemy of that camel would have been comparable in its material aspect to nothing less than the loss of a heavy battery in European warfare.

There was no time for infantry. Dempsey-Kelley, alone, galloped across the loose stones after the animal. The tribesmen, already on the point of leaving their shelters to seize it, sniped him from a dozen points. His horse fell under him as he clutched the camel's nose-rope. Running, he brought it back to safety, and collapsed with seven bullets in him.

Henfield, who succeeded him as P.M.C., and the younger Forbes, who was quartermaster, carried on the tradition of looking after themselves and their men. The theory on which Travis ran the post was that while his little command had to work just as hard as anybody in the Force under worse circumstances, Headquarters in their distribution of good things ignored him as a mere Line of Communications unit, and lavished their luxuries on those further ahead. This he held to be against justice and sound sense, and anyhow, what was the use of being on L. of C. unless you got something out of it?

So the tale of Nianazai grew. The officer sent up to replace Dempsey-Kelley was cut off untimely from the epicurean life by a ghazi's steel within four days of his arrival. In the same week Henfield, under pretext of getting money to pay the men, achieved a brilliant raid on the Base, returning with a couple of four-dozen cases of beer and stacks of sardines and lobster and salmon loaded on Government camels. Messes all up and down the line, drinking warm water out of enamelled iron mugs, deplored the impossibility of apprenticing their P.M.C.'s to Travis at Nianazai.

. . . . . .

Having finished his plan of the graveyard, and made a mental note of one or two places in the walls that already needed repair, Robertson strolled down to the river bank and plotted on a separate sheet the site of the funeral pyres where the Gurkhas had been burnt. A black stain on the earth, and a few flakes of charred wood, still marked the spot. He decided to build a cairn here. Most of the Gurkhas had died in the final defence of Nianazai that had been the last incident of the campaign, and he felt that all who had perished in

that resistance deserved permanent memorial.

The chill and shadow of approaching night surprised him here; he heard the faint thin call for pickets, wandered back in time to see the guard fall in, then bathed and changed for dinner. Things were easier now. He could demand as much transport as he needed, and it was with a quiet conscience, if with an appetite that was somewhat bored, that he sat down to his solitary meal of curried chicken and tinned pine-apple.

He was used to being solitary by this time. The bats in the straw-and-mud roof no longer startled him. The rustle of creeping things, the crackles and stirrings that from time to time disturbed the silence, left his nerves untroubled. It was the season of cold, and his brisk fire in the evenings was excellent company. The whole country was quiet now that the Force, having accomplished its task, had retired, leaving him to hold this farthest point where the British flag flew. He got plenty of *chikor;* there was *urial* to be shot on the hills; altogether he would get through the remaining two months of his tour of duty in command of this post quite comfortably.

Over his final whisky-peg his thoughts still ran on the late "pirates." The final attack on Nianazai had come opportunely enough, in a way, for Travis. He had blandly but firmly, and without authority, explanation, or excuse, lifted six half-maund bales of cabbage off a passing supply column. This, in the opinion of the Staff, had "put the tin hat on it." Asked for his reasons in writing, Travis had replied that his men had received no issue of lime-juice or fresh vegetables in seven weeks. In the Army this might be considered a reason but not an excuse. The matter had "gone further," and Headquarters were inclined to regard it seriously. There had been rumours of an intended court-martial: certainly a Major and two Captains had been despatched to hold a Court of Inquiry at Nianazai.

They were unable to reach the Fort, owing to the intervention of a lashkar of the tribesmen. That proposed Court of Inquiry indeed had to gallop for its life; and with its escort fought a very pretty little rearguard action of its own, instead of plumbing the real truth about the cabbages.

Snipers and disease had reduced Travis's command to less than a hundred men. The enemy, some three thousand strong, had executed a very cleverly planned surprise attack, under the impression that Nianazai contained large stores of ammunition and was vulnerable. They certainly got most of the ammunition, delivered to them at high velocity over the tops of the defences. When the relieving column finally broke through there was no water and no food left inside the fort, and only ten boxes of cartridges remained.

Robertson had arrived with the column, just in time to see Travis dying of many wounds, with a mysterious and ironic smile on his lips. The two brothers Forbes were already stretched out stiff side by side under the shadow of the guard-room. Henfield had been caught outside trying to carry water to the Detached Post, and the recoverable portion of his remains was brought in later.

And that had been the end of it all. The defeat outside Nianazai was the most conspicuous that the enemy had suffered. It finished the campaign. Such of the tribesmen as, not having been shot under the walls of the Fort, escaped the relieving column, returned moodily to their hills, where, after cutting the throats of four of their leaders for false guidance, they submitted to terms twice as stringent as the Politicals had been prepared to grant. And the General and a galaxy of Personages who expected to make "K.'s" out of the business attended the funeral of Travis and his subalterns.

As he turned over these memories, Robertson had heard vaguely the periodic cry "Number One" from the guard-room, followed by "Number Two, and all's well," and so on in turn round the line of sentries. From time to time the round was called. Now his subconscious telegraphed to his conscious intelligence news of a pause after Number Five. He was just reaching for belt and revolver when the cry was taken up and completed satisfactorily to Number Nine, the last sentry of the circuit.

A minute later the Jemadar of the Day clanked in to make his last report. "Sahib," he said, "all's well."

"Very good, Jemadar Sahib," said Robertson, "but tell Number Six to be a bit livelier next time. . . . And I shall want two fatigue parties tomorrow, ten Mahommedans and a Naik for the graveyard, and ten Hindus and a Naik for the *ghat*. Salaam."

Ten minutes later he was dozing off in his camp-bed, comfortably assured that all was indeed well with one Outpost of Empire.

GUN-RUNNING IN THE GULF.

III.

By the beginning of the year 1910 there were strong grounds for believing that a state of despondency and alarm had been created among those who had light-heartedly embarked on the sport of gun-running during previous years. Reports from A. were to the effect that the purchase of rifles in Masqat had almost entirely ceased from fear of their capture at sea; for it had now become well known that many ships' boats, launches, &c., were on the look-out for dhows along the Persian coast. Such Pathans as had found their way surreptitiously to Masqat were contemplating returning to the other side without making the purchases for which they had already risked much. Other reports stated that many Persian coast "nakhudas" of dhows were refusing to take Afghans across to the Arabian side, even when skilfully disguised as Baluchis, unless the Afghans promised that the dhow would not be required to carry back arms.

Meanwhile, caravan after caravan of Afghans was reported as arriving from the interior at numerous points near the coast, along the entire stretch of country between Bandar Abbas and Gwatar; and before long it was computed that there must already be some 1500 to 2000 Afghans distributed along the breadth of Biaban and Makran, and others were following. These gentry now began to give trouble by cutting the line between Chahbar and Jashk, destroying insulators, &c.; whilst fairly trustworthy information was received that the Afghans meditated concentrating about Karwan, with a view to attacking Chahbar on the 23rd January—the date that year of the Muharram.

The chief village of the small Karwan district was some twenty-four miles inland from Galag, and had for several years past afforded shelter to a reputed "holy" Afghan, Khalifeh Khair Mahomed by name, who, though a native of the Shurawak district on our border near Nushki, had taken a keen interest in gun-running, and emigrated to Persian Baluchistan chiefly for that reason. Here he had collected a small following of Afghans and others, and was frequently visited by, and hand-in-glove with, his countrymen who made the annual pilgrimage to the Gulf for the purchase of arms.

Reports were also current at this time that one Ghelam Khan, the acknowledged head Afghan of all the various parties operating along the coast, was endeavouring, with the help of Khalifeh Khair

Mahomed, to come to an arrangement with Sirdar Saiyid Khan of Geh. The two former buccaneers were credited with the desire to gain possession (amicably if possible, but by force if necessary) of Baluch country near the coast, where some 3000 Afghans had expressed their intention to settle. Saiyid Khan was said to have offered them the district of Ramp near Fanuch; but the Afghans wished to take possession of the Bint district nearer the coast, of which Islam Khan was the Baluch chieftain, and subordinate to Saiyid Khan. Ghelam Khan and all the Afghans then engaged in the arms traffic hoped to be joined by many others from Karachi and overland from Afghanistan before the end of January. They then proposed to discuss and carry out this ambitious scheme by taking possession of the Bint district, but were anxious to obtain Saiyid Khan's co-operation, in return for which they promised to uphold his authority as paramount Sirdar of Southern Baluchistan against the Persian Government.

It is perhaps unnecessary for me to emphasise the threatening nature of such a situation should the scheme be permitted to materialise. With a strong colony of brave and well-armed Afghans established about Bint, almost athwart of our telegraph line between Chahbar and Jashk, both stations would at all times be liable to be wiped out. These Afghans bore the British no goodwill for the steps that had been taken to interfere with what was regarded by them as a perfectly legitimate trade; and they would thus be in a position to wreak their vengeance by destroying the telegraph line frequently, and by attacking either station at their own convenience—unless the latter were so largely garrisoned permanently as to make the attempt appear too costly an adventure. An extraordinary impetus, too, would probably be given to gun-running at all seasons of the year; for existing tactics need then no longer be confined to the cold weather months alone, since the Afghans would have no particular incentive to be back in Afghanistan before the hot weather descended upon them. Arms could be gradually accumulated about Bint during the hot weather, when life in the Persian Gulf would be almost unendurable for our men in patrolling ships and open boats, and they could then be removed at leisure to Afghanistan the following cold season. The Persian Government was effete and quite incapable of dealing with the dangers of an Afghan colony established in a remote corner of its territory; and the ultimate result would probably have been — if this traffic in arms was to be really scotched — the despatch of a strong British force of all arms to destroy this nest of desperadoes.

In any case the situation was developing so rapidly that, as a precautionary measure,

the Government of India decided early in January to send further reinforcements of officers and men of the 117th Mahrattas to Jashk and Chahbar, and to despatch a mixed force of infantry, guns, and sappers on the R.I.M. transport *Hardinge* to effect landings and make raids along the Persian coast on stores of arms still within reasonable striking distance of the shore. The acting-Resident at Bushire also arranged for a trustworthy messenger to be sent from Chahbar with a letter to Saiyid Khan, reminding him of his promises to Colonel Cox, and strongly advising him to have nothing to do with Afghan rifle thieves plotting against the Shah's Government.

There were still, however, a few daring skippers who were not to be daunted, and were quite prepared to attempt to run the gauntlet of the blockading ships, in order to gain the very high prices now being offered by Afghans for the successful landing of their arms. When they found that arms carefully concealed in false bottoms, below cargoes consisting of bales of cloth, baskets of dates, piles of timber, &c., were unearthed by the vigilance of the patrolling ships' crews deputed to examine the contents of a rounded-up dhow, the skippers resorted to other stratagems. The next trick of the trade was to have bundles of ten or a dozen rifles done up separately, and placed on the top of the cargo. But each bundle was firmly bound up with rope, the other end of which was secured to an iron eye let in to the outside of the keel of the dhow. When there was an immediate danger of the dhow being overhauled by a pursuing ship, overboard would go all the bundles of rifles, and remain serenely suspended in line by the ropes to the eyes at the bottom of the craft! The boarding party would naturally find nothing suspicious in the cargo of other stuff on board, and after thorough examination the dhow would be released to continue her voyage. Once out of sight, it was simple enough to haul all the rifles aboard again, until the next time a patrol was met. When the Navy was informed of this device, they quickly defeated it by keel-hauling every dhow boarded with a stout hawser. I warned the Navy next to examine carefully any floating logs they might run across; for information received by me made it fairly certain that, when hard pressed, dhows now changed their tactics to heaving overboard innocent-looking balks of wood, to which bundles of rifles were likewise attached. These again could be subsequently retrieved by dhows after they had been released when nothing incriminating was discovered on board or below the surface.

Altogether, one was up against some pretty cunning rogues, and a constant battle of wits was in progress. Even in Jashk itself we were surrounded by people in Government employ who were deeply

implicated in the arms traffic. I soon learnt that Afghans hanging about Old Jashk were engaging Jashkis to come into New Jashk, whence they proceeded by mail steamer to Masqat, where they purchased arms, and returned with them hidden within their merchandise — rifles in sacks of flour or grain and bales of cloth; and Mauser pistols in baskets of dates, and, apparently, full kerosene-oil tins! On several occasions small consignments of rifles and pistols were passed through the Customs in this manner, and then removed on camels to Old Jashk. My informant had seen these arms himself there; and they were handed over to one of Barkat Khan's men, who was working in with the Persian Customs' official and Afghans. The Jashkis leaving for Masqat were assisted on their arrival there by a peon (messenger) in the Masqat telegraph office, and his wife, a daughter of the Jashk telegraph station coxswain. This good woman at intervals travelled herself between Masqat and Jashk, and smuggled arms through with the connivance of one Meshedi Abbas, the Persian Customs' official at Jashk.

After considerable trouble, lengthy correspondence, and through the good offices of the Resident in the Gulf and the British Minister at Teheran, I finally obtained permission from the Belgian Customs' officials for one of the officers at Jashk and Chabar to be present at all Custom-house examinations at these places. There was much perturbation and opposition to this procedure in the local dovecots, but my point was eventually carried, and that source of leakage then died the death.

Meshedi Abbas was subsequently dismissed from his position at Jashk, as the man was a thorough-paced rascal; but I had a harrowing half-hour with Mrs Meshedi, when she nearly melted me to tears by protesting what a true upright gentleman her husband was, and how grievously I had misjudged his actions. Indeed, she almost convinced me that I was the biggest blackguard unhung; but there obviously was not room for both Meshedi Abbas and me in Jashk if the arms traffic was to suffer. And it was he —I have no doubt justly—who had to go.

Another individual on the Jashk Quarantine Staff—Dadullah by name—took advantage, too, of his official position. This enabled him to board all mail-steamers, and so to institute a regular system for receiving Mauser pistols from Masqat. We ran the beggar to earth at last, and I was able to get him removed also. At a later stage he proved most intractable, developed into Barkat Khan's evil genius, and became in no small measure responsible for the undoing of that chieftain. There was no doubt Barkat was closely mixed up in all this business, and was still in league with the Afghans; so it was time a lesson was administered to this recalcitrant rogue. A

suitable opportunity was at hand.

From information in my possession Barkat had a large *cache* of arms and ammunition for Afghans concealed in a cave in the hills close to the village of Gaigan, a few miles north of Old Jashk. I suggested by radio to Captain Hunt, the S.N.O., that a landing should be carried out by night near the mouth of the Gaigan stream, four or five miles to the west of Old Jashk, and the store raided by an inland march thence at dawn. Barkat himself was now at New Jashk, where he had just taken unto himself another wife in the shape of the thirteen-year-old daughter of Meshedi Abbas, and was celebrating the nuptials in this village. So he was well out of the way.

After dark on the 15th January a radio message was received from the *Fox* asking me to keep the wireless going, and saying that Captain Hunt would land a force at 3 A.M. if I could help with fifty men ready to embark in boats off New Jashk at midnight. I replied that I could help, and believed there were only a very few Afghans at present in charge of the *cache*. I sent for Captain White, told him to have fifty of his men ready, not to breathe a word about the intended raid to any one, and to order his men to take 150 rounds each and some "chuppaties" for their next day's food. Captain Hunt himself came ashore a few minutes later; we discussed the raid together, and he expressed the wish to entrust the command of the enterprise to his first-lieutenant, Lieutenant Briggs, R.N. Since Captain Hunt was not going, it was decided that I should not accompany the force either, as I was senior to Briggs; but B. was to go with White and endeavour to secure a Baluch on landing, to point out the exact position of the store, either by force or by a bribe of money. Captain Hunt returned to the *Fox* about 11 P.M., and White and B. proceeded quietly to the infantry lines later, when the troops embarked in boats and were conveyed to the *Fox* unknown to any one but myself in Jashk.

There was a good deal of noise and shouting in New Jashk village about 2 A.M., so Barkat's wedding festivities were evidently going with a hearty swing; and I could not refrain from wondering how he would feel next day after the raid had taken place. Soon after daybreak the *Fox* was seen standing some miles out in the bay opposite Old Jashk, and I received a radio message —"Party landed without incident; no further news." Towards midday another message arrived — "Several explosions of gun-cotton have taken place, and a bonfire has now been blazing for two hours; so they have evidently got hold of something."

Barkat apparently only obtained wind of the raid shortly before 1 P.M., and at once set off from New Jashk on a fast-trotting camel round the shore of the bay towards Old Jashk.

At the same time, he despatched a messenger hot haste to Yakdar, calling on his men to assemble and follow him immediately to Gaigan. By the time these arrived the birds had flown.

At 4 P.M. the *Fox* sent me a radio message — "Thanks to your information and co-operation, raid has been very successful. 1350 rifles and 160,000 rounds ammunition have been destroyed." I, in my turn, now sent a message of congratulations to Briggs, White, and all concerned, who were by then safely on board the cruiser again. Soon afterwards the *Fox* was once more off New Jashk, and White and his fifty men were towed in two boats by a launch, and landed shortly before 6 P.M. All were bursting with joy over the results of their outing, which had afforded them some well-deserved excitement after the monotony of garrison duty on the Jashk sandspit.

The force had landed from the *Fox* at the mouth of the Gaigan stream, as arranged, at about 3.30 A.M., and reached Gaigan village, some six and a half miles from the shore, shortly after 7 A.M. Several Baluchis were seized *en route*, and made to act as guides, the village being completely surprised by this sudden advent of troops. After some search among the foot-hills, the cave was eventually discovered within a few hundred yards of the village. The Afghans guarding this depot fled on the approach of the raiding party, who at once proceeded with the destruction of the arms by thoroughly breaking up the rifles and blowing up and burning the ammunition. This work was carried out without any interference; and when completed, the whole party marched back to the shore unmolested, and at once re-embarked in their boats for the *Fox*.

The essence of the whole affair, absolute secrecy, had been well observed, and not a soul in the station had any idea of what was afoot when they retired to rest the previous night. The only fly in the ointment was that the rifles proved a somewhat indifferent lot—consisting chiefly of Sniders, Gras, &c., and not the most modern types of magazine weapons. Still, it was anticipated that the moral effect of this sudden swoop on an arms depot, regarded as safe from the attentions of the Navy, would be far-reaching, and strike a note of uneasiness among all who were inclined to persist in tempting fortune by further endeavours to land arms for the Afghans.

Needless to say, Barkat Khan was beside himself with rage at the action taken by us, and protested that the rifles destroyed were his own private property, and intended for arming his followers. He even prevailed upon the Persian in charge of the New Jashk fort to despatch a telegram to the Daria Begi, accusing the British of having invaded Persian territory, burnt his house, destroyed his

property, and so on—all of which, incidentally, were lies, as during the raid no damage had been done to houses, people, or anything, save the arms and ammunition. And these, I had ample evidence to prove, belonged to one Ali Khan at Masqat, and were for sale to Afghans, through the agency of Barkat, who received his commission on them when sold. Barkat further wrote to me from his place of retreat, asking what fault he had committed that he should thus be treated. I replied that we had no quarrel with him personally, but only with Afghan gun-runners. Information had been received by me that Afghans had so far abused his hospitality as to store arms within his territory near Gaigan. Consequently, the Sirkar (Government) had given orders to have them searched for, and destroyed if found; and he was well aware that neither his people nor property had in any way been interfered with during the operation. If he would come in and see me, I should be very pleased to talk over matters with him. But the rogue continued to keep out of the way for some time, sulking in the hills, and sending out messengers far and wide to his Afghan friends, whom he warned to clear away into the hills from the coast, with their animals and belongings.

Captain Hunt now informed me that the Admiral was leaving Bombay for the Gulf in his flag-ship, the *Hyacinth*, on the 21st January, accompanied by the *Hardinge*—which was carrying half a battalion of the 123rd (Outram's) Rifles, the 31st Mountain Battery, and a section of sappers and miners. The naval Commander-in-Chief, therefore, desired to be acquainted by wireless on the 23rd whether there was any possibility of reaching depots of arms hidden in villages or hills near the coast. I had remained for some time past in touch with the consignment landed at Lash in the middle of December; and this, from various reports, had not yet been removed from the vicinity of Hasar.

I also received a telegram from the Admiral himself, a day or two later, asking me to prepare a plan of action against his arrival in the Gulf. Lieut.-Colonel Whyte of the 117th Mahrattas, and several other officers and men of his battalion, arrived the following day from India; so I was able to hand over command of the station to him and explain all the defence proposals. In these he concurred, and arranged to send another British officer to join Major Raven at Chahbar. That officer had been closely co-operating with me in intelligence matters in that area, since he arrived from India with reinforcements some six weeks earlier, and was giving me much help. At daylight on the 24th January Admiral Slade anchored off New Jashk in the *Hyacinth*, and was shortly followed by the *Fox*. I was invited to breakfast on board with the Commander-in-Chief, and to discuss the next

move with him and Captain Hunt. The *Hyacinth* left Jashk again shortly before midday, to drop boats along an unprotected stretch of coast, and returned about 5 P.M. A boat was sent ashore for me and B. after dark, and when we got aboard the *Hyacinth*, steamed away for the rendezvous with the *Hardinge*. We joined her next morning at 7.30, out of sight of land, and Colonel Delamain, commanding the troops, came aboard the flag-ship shortly after to discuss the details of the projected raid on the store of arms at Hasar. It was decided the raiding party should consist of 200 men of the 123rd Rifles, a section of the Mountain Battery and Field Hospital, and a demolition party of blue-jackets from the flag-ship. Colonel Delamain then returned to the *Hardinge* to issue the necessary orders regarding the disembarkation of the force.

An agent I had despatched a day or two before from Jashk, to bring me the latest intelligence of the Hasar *cache*, had not returned when I left on the flag-ship. I arranged, therefore, with Mr Gumbley of the I. E. Telegraph Department at Jashk to take the information of this man and to communicate it to me by wireless directly received. His message now arrived, and was to the effect that the Afghans had left their former place, and gone about a mile farther into the hills; but the marks of their original grass huts still remained. There were only about a dozen men with the arms when the informant located them the previous day —the others having left for Jagin Balaat to get camels, on which to remove the arms farther into the interior. Barkat had warned them to proceed to that place as speedily as possible for that purpose. But as it would take the Afghans at least a day to load up, even if they procured the camels at once, we should still be able, with a modicum of luck, to "bag the crowd." So our hopes ran high.

On Colonel Delamain's return from the *Hardinge*, Admiral Slade steamed off to reconnoitre a suitable landing-place in the vicinity of Khor Lash. The *Hardinge* was to follow on, so as to reach Khor Lash after dark. When the flag-ship reached our destination Colonel Delamain, Captain Dick, R.N.—the flag-captain—and I went ashore with a party to select the landing-place for the force. We soon found a suitable one on a broad flat expanse of sand, frequented by flamingoes and many other water-birds, on the northern side of the mouth of the Khor; and were back again on the *Hyacinth* before dark, when the *Hardinge* also came up.

It was a bright moonlight night, and as the flag-ship was proceeding to Masqat when the disembarkation of the force was completed, B. and I transfered to the *Hardinge* after dinner. The sea was calm, and disembarkation commenced about 8 P.M. in four large boats towed by two launches. Owing, however, to

the shallow nature of the coast, the *Hardinge* had to stand out about one and a half miles from land. The men were got off the ship expeditiously enough, but disembarking took a long time, on account of the distance between the points which the boats could reach and the high dry ground beyond, to which everything had to be conveyed. The mules delayed matters considerably, and it was 3.40 A.M. before the last boatload was landed; and then eight battery mules stampeded, and were unfortunately not recovered in time to accompany the force, which marched off at 5 A.M. on the 26th January on its stiff fifteen-mile trek. I placed B. at the disposal of Colonel Delamain, whilst I remained on board the *Hardinge* to keep in touch with the Admiral by wireless.

Now the striking force was off on its mission, the next thing to do at daylight was to try and recover the precious lost mules, of which eight had disappeared altogether, whilst seven others were left on the shore with their drivers, kit, &c. I accordingly asked the Admiral by radio for permission to send a party of one British officer and seventy-five men ashore to march these animals back by land to Jashk —a distance of twelve or fourteen miles—and to have them met half-way by another party of fifty or sixty Mahrattas under a British officer from Jashk. The proposal being agreed to, I communicated the Admiral's instructions by wireless to Lieut.-Colonel Whyte at Jashk; and as soon as the additional infantry had been landed the *Hardinge* left for Jashk. The two mule search-parties reached Jashk without incident shortly before 5 P.M., but had found no trace of the missing battery mules *en route*. Happily they were brought in a few days later by Baluchis, who had been offered rewards for their recovery.

It was some time before we received any intelligence from the raiding party itself; but on the afternoon of the 27th I was informed by an agent that at 2 P.M. the previous day he had seen a big bonfire blazing in the hills near where the store should have been, and that he had heard loud reports like the exploding of many cartridges. This news was passed on by radio to the Admiral, as he was naturally desirous of learning whether the raid had been successful or not. Early next morning this was corroborated by another agent, who reported that the raid had been successful, the arms destroyed, and three Afghans killed. But still there was no news from Colonel Delamain himself, though I had hoped before this to get a message from him by his cutting into the Chahbar-Jashk line, which ran not far from Hasar.

About 10.30 A.M. on the 28th, however, Major Nepean of the 123rd Rifles arrived, accompanied by a party of jovial bluejackets riding mules, with their boots slung over

their shoulders, and their raw-rubbed feet exposed to the cooling breezes as relief from the tortures they had undergone during their three days' unaccustomed tramp in boots! This was evidently the vanguard of the force, and Major Nepean handed me the following message from Colonel Delamain for transmission to the Admiral: "After 7½ hours march found party of Afghans 'sangared' in very strong position in hills about 3½ miles N. of Hasar village. Attacked and drove them out. Enemy retired, leaving three dead Ghilzais behind, and 760 rifles and carbines, besides revolvers, bayonets, and gunpowder; also just under 50,000 rounds of ammunition, all of which I captured and destroyed. Our casualties nil."

The force itself arrived shortly after midday, looking pretty tired after their three days' experience ashore in an inhospitable dry region; but they at once embarked on the *Hardinge*, leaving the mules ashore for the time being. Colonel Delamain informed me that the success had been due in no small measure to the capture of a Baluch guide, to whom Rs. 100 had been promised; and he asked me to honour this promise by paying over the sum to the man, and Rs. 20 to two other Baluchis. He added further: "B. is worth his weight in gold"—an opinion which entirely accorded with mine regarding my faithful assistant.

As the Admiral had only a day or two previously also received information that a pinnace of the *Philomel* had captured 20,000 rounds of Mauser pistol ammunition in a deserted fort three miles east of Bunji, he already had much to congratulate himself on in the combined sea-and-land operations, initiated by him, proving so immediately successful. Here again secrecy had been well observed; and, in addition, it was certainly a very fine performance on the part of Colonel Delamain and his force to effect a surprise attack on so distant an objective, and over ground not previously reconnoitred — so practically unknown.

Events were "panning-out" very satisfactorily; but it was still necessary to bring all Baluch sirdars implicated in the traffic in arms to heel.

IV.

The *Hyacinth* was back at Jashk shortly before dark on the evening of the return of the raiding party there; and the flag-lieutenant came ashore to take me off to see the Admiral, in order to discuss further action with him and Colonel Delamain. The flagship left again during the night on a tour of inspection; and next day all mules were re-embarked on the *Hardinge*. On the morning of the 30th January the Admiral returned, and came

ashore after breakfast, with several officers of his staff, to inspect the defences of the station; and, in order to expedite their completion, kindly agreed to the section of sappers on board the *Hardinge* lending a hand. They were to live ashore, whilst the *Hardinge* stood fast at Jashk, until the return of the Admiral from a trip to Bandar Abbas, where a large number of Afghans had lately been assembling. As Captain Rae had only a small Indian escort for the protection of the British Consulate there, I had lately submitted proposals to him for placing the enclosure in a state of defence; and the Admiral desired to satisfy himself as to its security by personal investigation of local conditions. He left the same afternoon.

Meanwhile, Barkat Khan in his lair was feeling thoroughly uncomfortable, and as a result of the raid on Hasar, now showed anxiety to come in and make peace with us. He sent in a letter to me to that effect, and the Admiral agreed to receive him on his return. Unfortunately, when the *Hyacinth* arrived on the 1st February, the Admiral was down with an attack of fever, so it was arranged that Captain Dick, R.N., should grant Barkat the interview in my quarters ashore, and Lieutenant Eadie of the Indian Army act as interpreter for the flag-captain.

Shortly before 11 A.M. Barkat put in his appearance, looking extremely nervous and suspicious of our intentions towards him. The discussion lasted some time, and the result promised to be satisfactory, for Barkat declared he would have nothing more to do with the Afghans, and would unreservedly throw in his lot with us against them. As a proof of his sincerity, he promised to keep me informed of movements of Afghans, any intended landings of arms, &c., and to get Mir Haji of Sirik in, and his old fox of a brother, Mustapha (in whose territory the Lash consignment of arms had been landed, and on which the rogue had received the usual commission) to visit me again. He further expressed his willingness to write to Khalifeh Khair Mahomed to come in and see the Admiral, on the pledge of a safe-conduct being granted him. Captain Dick did not fail to make it quite clear to Barkat that this traffic in arms had got to cease—and that those who afforded us assistance in the future would be regarded as friends, but that those who helped the Afghans would be treated as enemies.

Barkat was apparently greatly relieved when he was permitted to return to his house in New Jashk, after the interview; for he and all his people seemed to be firmly convinced that he was placing his head in the lion's mouth, and would surely be made a prisoner, and removed from the country on one of the warships. In order to emphasise the power of the Navy, how-

ever, it appeared to me that a visit to the flag-ship might impress Barkat Khan still further. To this the C.-in-C. agreed; so, on the next visit of the *Hyacinth*, Barkat and several of his entourage were introduced to the Admiral on board, and there again received serious advice from His Excellency as to the line of action he was recommended to take in future.

The Admiral further arranged that Barkat's letter to Khalifeh Khair Mahomed should be conveyed by a Baluch messenger, who would be given a passage to Galag in the cruiser *Proserpine*—lately arrived in the Gulf from home—which was due at Jashk that afternoon. Barkat and his following were then conducted over the flag-ship, and had the wireless, electric light, torpedoes, methods of navigation, &c., explained to them; after which two 6-inch shells were fired off for their edification. One was a solid shot fired at a range of 8000 yards, and the other shrapnel at 1500 yards, both of which astonished them greatly; for they had refused previously to believe it was possible to shell Old Jashk from where the *Hyacinth* was anchored—a distance of about 10,000 yards. The whole party returned ashore at midday pondering deeply. During the next few days the troops from the *Hardinge* were landed daily for exercise, training, and to practise disembarkation rapidly; and there is little doubt that the strength of the force was greatly exaggerated by the time news of its presence reached the ears of the Afghans still about the coast. Obviously, therefore, the moral effect produced by its advent in the Gulf could not be measured in terms of the numbers of guns and men of which it actually consisted. Possessing, as we now did, the inestimable advantage of being able, suddenly and secretly, to land a mobile force anywhere along the Makran and Biaban coasts, no Baluch Sirdar would feel safe from a visitation—if his actions gave rise to a suspicion of his co-operating with the Afghans. In order, however, to heighten this sense of uncertainty and insecurity, it appeared desirable to make surprise landings at various places which hitherto had been favourite destinations of gun-running dhows from the Arabian coast. As a first step, the *Hardinge* left Jashk on the 8th February for Chahbar, where it was intended to land the force with the object of impressing the inhabitants near this Government station and establishing proof of our ability to descend speedily on any portion of the coast—should occasion demand it.

Shortly before her departure from Jashk, Mustapha Khan paid me a visit. I emphasised the fact I had not had the pleasure of seeing him for quite a long time. Much had occurred in this neighbourhood of late, and he had studiously kept out of the way. Why? Ever a ready liar, he replied that some of his children had

been ill up in Bashakard, and one of them had died: whereupon I remarked that his absence, strangely enough, dated from the time immediately following the landing of arms at Khor Lash, on which I was given to understand he had received his commission, and then disappeared into the wilds of Bashakard. He of course denied the soft impeachment; and as it was little use my attempting to compete with him in the gentle art of lying, I contented myself in endeavouring to make him understand that this gun-running business had got to stop, and that those who placed difficulties in our way would probably suffer in consequence. He protested he was most anxious to be the friend of the British, and would afford us every assistance in his power. He vowed he would warn all Afghans to clear out of his territory at once, and order his people to have nothing to do with them in the future, and would willingly make his submission to the Admiral whenever it was convenient to His Excellency to receive him.

How long he would observe his promises remained to be seen; but there appeared a probability that most of the Baluch sirdars along the coast had "got the wind up" now, for next day a messenger arrived with a letter from Mir Kambar of Kuhistak, written seven days before. Although he was married to Barkat's sister, he complained that that chieftain had attacked him the previous year, destroyed all his property, &c., and expressed a desire to come in and see me. He would prefer to come by sea — which one could easily understand—and in that case asked that he might be provided with a pass, as he would be accompanied by a few armed men, and they might all be seized, otherwise, by one of our patrolling ships. I passed on this information to the Admiral, who was again proceeding to Bandar Abbas, and it was arranged the messenger should return in the *Hyacinth* to Kuhistak with a letter from me to Mir Kambar, asking that chief to pay his respects to the Admiral on the flag-ship, which he subsequently did at Bandar Abbas.

Meanwhile, Captain Rae reported from Bandar Abbas that the Afghans in the town were becoming a bit fractious. He had been joined there by Gregson of the Police, who was helping him to clear some of them out of the place, and to ship others off back to Karachi by mail. Hence the departure of the Admiral to this possible storm centre. Gregson in a letter to me stated that he had a hold over these Afghans in the shape of their accounts, and thought there was a good chance of being able to get them to quit without much trouble. Still the arrival of the flag-ship would greatly strengthen them in this ticklish undertaking.

The Admiral also instructed the *Hardinge* to land troops at 5 A.M. on the 12th February on the Biaban coast near

Sirik, along which area Afghans were constantly moving to and fro, and to search the village of Girau. By such an operation the transportation of arms would be rendered extremely risky to the gun-runners, since there was only one track that could be utilised by them in that part. Even therefore if no arms were seized on shore, the moral effect of a sudden landing at dawn on that coast would probably be considerable. My information pointed to the fact that although Afghans were scattered about in small parties, the only really large gathering of them was at Sarzeh, some ten to twelve miles to the S.E. of Sirik, amid the foot-hills. Owing, however, to bad weather about this time, it was not found possible to carry out the landing until a week later; for a stiff shamal was blowing, and the heavy surf made it a risky business to run fully-laden boats on to the open beach. The *Hardinge* therefore took shelter in a secluded bay on the Arabian coast in the vicinity of Cape Masandam.

Eventually the infantry on the *Hardinge* were landed on the 20th February at Girau, as previously arranged, thoroughly searched that village, and finding no arms, continued their march by land to Sirik, which was also searched. By a piece of good fortune Mir Haji happened to be present in Sirik, and was seized in his own house. All his papers were confiscated and made over to the Admiral, as the *Hyacinth* was standing by the *Hardinge* during the operations. Colonel Delamain had taken the opportunity of cautioning Mir Haji as to his future association with Afghans, and then released him; but the nocturnal landing and easy capture of that chief had a very pronounced influence on him and his people — by showing how vulnerable was the position of the coastal Baluch sirdars from the sea.

The troops re-embarked on the *Hardinge* off Sirik, and she at once proceeded to Bandar Abbas in order to enable Colonel Delamain to draw up a report on the defensibility of the British Consulate. If considered advisable, its small garrison was to be increased up to fifty men under a British officer by further reinforcements of Mahrattas from Jashk. From subsequent reports received by me, Colonel Delamain's force appears narrowly to have missed being heavily attacked by several hundred Afghans from Sarzeh. On hearing of the approach of the small raiding party towards Sirik from Girau, they had swarmed out of the foot-hills to molest it; but before they reached the scene the force was already safely on board the *Hardinge* again and steaming off to another destination.

Shortly afterwards Mir Haji expressed his intention of coming into Jashk to make his peace with the British; but attempts to get Khalifeh Khair Mahomed in had so far proved unproductive. The man was as elusive as an eel:

first he would write to say he was coming, and then a very plausible letter would follow explaining how he had been unable to carry out his ardent desire to do so. It was decided, therefore, at a conference on the flag-ship between the Admiral, Colonel Delamain, and myself, that the *Hardinge* should proceed to Galag, land troops there on the 25th February, who would remain ashore for a couple of days or so, collecting information, sketching, &c. Such reports as I already possessed regarding anchorage, landing-places, water-supply, grazing, &c., I passed on; but these would require verification and amplification, in case it became necessary to land a large force there to march on Bint, along the course of the Rapch river. I arranged also for Colonel Delamain to be met on arrival at Galag by one of my agents, with fresh vegetables, &c.

On my return to shore I sent a telephone message to the chief telegraph linesman at Rapch, whose life had been threatened a day or two before by some of Khalifeh Khair Mahomed's Pathans, and informed him that a force was being landed next day near by, and he had better advertise this fact widely. The Karwanis at once became greatly alarmed and sent in a message through this man begging that we would not destroy their country. They had only permitted Khalifeh Khair Mahomed to reside amongst them as they were not aware he was an enemy of the British; but now they understood he was, they would not permit him to remain in the country any longer, and desired to meet the commander of the force in a friendly way to assure him of their decision.

I suggested by radio to Colonel Delamain that he should meet this deputation and exact a written promise from them, signed by their most important men, to the effect that they would provide no assistance, such as camels, boats, or other means of transport, to any one engaged in the arms traffic; and would furnish information regarding any projected operations to me at Jashk. This was carried out by Colonel Delamain on the 27th February, and the petty chiefs present expressed their willingness and ability to exclude small parties of Afghans from the Karwan district, but that they could not cope with large forces. They stated, however, that if Islam Khan of Bint were addressed on the subject, he could prevent the passage of Afghans through his territory and afford the Karwanis protection. Islam Khan was, accordingly, subsequently communicated with. The deputation reported that Khalifeh Khair Mahomed and his followers had fled towards Bint when they heard of our intended visit to Galag.

Next day I received a letter from Saiyid Khan of Geh, saying he had sent men in all directions, ordering every one connected with the arms traffic

out of the country. If there was anything else we wished done, he would be glad to carry out our instructions. I acquainted the Resident by cable, and he agreed that I should merely acknowledge the letter, and thank Saiyid Khan, informing him that the Resident was glad to hear of his action, which was being reported to the Persian Government.

Saiyid Khan had apparently also sent a letter to Chahbar for transmission to the Resident. This was telegraphed on from Chahbar to Bushire; and in it the Sirdar stated that he had proceeded from Bampur to Geh with a large force and guns to punish the Afghans (!). He had also sent a messenger to Khalifeh Khair Mahomed, ordering him to leave Baluchistan at once; and notified to all the sirdars of Persian Baluchistan that whenever they found any Afghans, or even the Khalifeh, they were to "loot and kill them" — and that he, too, would do the same. He went on to say that all the Afghans were now gathered in Bashakard, with the help of Mir Barkat and others; and concluded by informing the Resident that "Ali Khan, the son of Musa, is a rifle and ammunition merchant in Masqat. He secretes Afghans, and gives them every help. Otherwise there would not have been so many Afghans in the country this year. Mir Barkat and Ali Khan are the real culprits."

The above was probably a pretty highly-coloured account of the action taken by Saiyid Khan; but it certainly corroborated all previous information collected about the two last named. And recent reports I had received regarding events in Barkat's territory strongly pointed to his still playing a double game, in spite of the frightening he had received a few weeks before. To test his protestations to the Admiral, I had called on Mir Barkat early in February to seize two notorious gun-running "nakhudas," who lived at Bunji in his territory, and to hand them over to me. He had replied he had sent to have them taken, but unfortunately the two men were absent with their dhows fishing, and he was unable, therefore, to lay his hands upon them. Time passed, and he did nothing further in the matter, for the very good reason that he had sent Dadullah to arrest (?) them. This individual undoubtedly gave them warning to clear out, and then returned to New Jashk to resume his duties as head of the quarantine guard there. As soon as I heard of this duplicity I sent for Dadullah, administered him a homily, and informed him I was aware that he was in partnership with Rahim Dad, one of the "nakhudas" in question, and that the quarantine officer had decided to dispense with his services, and that of his brother Shahi. Barkat was also written to regarding these men, and came to see me a few days later. He gave me an entirely differ-

ent story to that composed by Dadullah, and seemed greatly exercised at the dismissal of that useful accomplice of his.

The sequel to this was that, some days after, B. had a narrow shave of being shot; and it was entirely due to his presence of mind and courage that he escaped with his life. A large number of people were on the beach near the Customs' shed helping to land stores, which was being done with great difficulty owing to the roughness of the sea. B. was standing by, watching, when Shahi came up to him and began to accuse B. of being the cause of his dismissal. Losing his temper, Shahi seized hold of B., and called to one of his "seedies" (Africans) near by to shoot B. The "seedie" promptly rushed up to Shahi's assistance with a loaded rifle, which he pointed at B. Holding Shahi with one hand, and grasping the "seedie's" rifle with the other, B. shouted out to the jemadar of Mahrattas, who was assisting Captain White in superintending the landing of loads. Fortunately this Indian officer was only twelve or fifteen paces distant, and immediately dashed to B.'s rescue. B. called on him to take the rifle first, and see if it was loaded, and on the jemadar pointing it upwards and pulling the trigger, it went off, whilst the magazine, too, was found to be fully charged. Shahi and his "seedie" were quickly overpowered, and marched off to the station, where, after a brief court of inquiry, Colonel Whyte ordered both prisoners twenty-five lashes each as a start. These were administered with commendable vigour by one of the sepoys of the guard, after which the two rogues were incarcerated in one of the defence redoubts.

This incident was about the frozen limit; so Barkat Khan was also summoned and informed that, though it was regretted we had had to punish two of his men in this way, we would not tolerate attempts on the life of any one within the British concession at Jashk. I again warned him to get rid of Dadullah and Shahi from his *entourage*, as I felt certain they would land him in serious difficulties with us sooner or later. He besought pardon for Shahi in the most humble manner, by folding his hands across the breast, and bowing down his head on to my table, repeating that he was my slave, and other bunkum of a like nature. He, however, promised to get rid of Dadullah at once; whilst the two men were ordered to be kept prisoners by the Admiral, to whom the affair was reported by radio, until the arrival of the Daria Begi, then on his way to Jashk.

Prior to this, Mr Gregson had reached Jashk from Bandar Abbas, and spent several days with me. The papers captured in Mir Haji's house had been handed over to him to digest on his return to Karachi, in the hope that valuable information regarding

Afghans engaged in the arms traffic might be extracted from them, and prove of service to him in his police arrangements both at Indian ports and on the mail-steamers plying to and from the Gulf. Bandar Abbas had been reinforced by another fifty men from Jashk before he left, and things appeared fairly secure there at the moment, as very few Afghans remained.

Owing to the strict blockade, however, of the Biaban and Makran coasts, the Afghans were attempting now to change their tactics by landing arms along the Persian coast to the west of Bandar Abbas. Arms had recently been landed on the mainland some fifty miles beyond that port at Khamir, in the Clarence Straits, and a consignment of 500 rifles removed by the Afghans six or seven miles inland from that place. Goguyer's agent at Masqat was assisting the Afghans by conveying arms for them in dhows flying the French flag, and a depot had been formed not far from the port of Lingeh at Dishgun. Information was at hand, too, that arms were being run across from the Qatr peninsula to a point on the Persian coast opposite the island of Shaikh Shu'aib. In order to deal with these new developments, which greatly enlarged the sphere of operations, Admiral Slade arranged that a watch should be kept along the Arabian coast to the west of Cape Masandam, and, as soon as available, a ship was to patrol between the islands of Shaikh Shu'aib and Qishm. Any dhow flying the French flag was to be followed, and directly arms were landed from it on Persian soil they were to be seized. The Daria Begi had been approached to do something with regard to the store near Lingeh; but he evidently felt none too sure of his position, and rather evaded the problem. He, however, set forth from Bushire on the *Persepolis* with 150 "tufangchis" (riflemen) on the 22nd February for a tour to Bandar Abbas, Jashk, and Chahbar.

We had information also that a large depot of arms was being formed at Sohar on the Arabian coast north of Masqat; and there seemed a probability that these would be conveyed on camels overland across the Oman peninsula to points along the Pirate Coast, and there loaded on dhows destined for the Persian coast about Lingeh, a run possibly of little more than twelve hours from Dibai, and other ports, with a favourable wind. If this procedure were followed our difficulties would be largely increased by the wider possibilities open to the Afghans to elude the blockading ships.

I had been considering for some time past how to get hold of these Sohar arms—reputed to be some 5000 in number—as we could not touch them in the Sultan of Masqat's territory. I now came to the conclusion it might be possible, perhaps, to bribe Biaban "nakhudas" to carry arms from the Batinah coast, which should "acci-

dentally" fall into our hands at sea. Much of their normal profits were gone, as, with few exceptions, they feared to work for the Afghans; and if *we* could offer them a rupee for every rifle (with 100 rounds) which we captured, trade might look up for them again, and it would pay us handsomely too.

I accordingly wired to A.H.Q. India and the Admiral, and asked for authority to offer liberal rewards for these risky undertakings, which demanded the utmost secrecy; and if approved I would start operations on these lines at once, since time would be required to arrange everything satisfactorily. Sanction was eventually accorded, and the necessary steps were taken to get into touch with several "nakhudas," whom I secretly interviewed, and who agreed to embark on this tricky manœuvre. Several important captures were subsequently effected by this means; but as I was relieved at the end of March and returned to Simla, it fell to the lot of my successor to announce them during his period of office.

On the 1st March Mir Haji of Sirik at length arrived at New Jashk on his promised visit. He was a small man, possibly forty-five years of age, with short beard and whiskers turning grey near the roots, and was accompanied by his old uncle, Mir Yusuf, and five or six others. After usual presentations, &c., I requested that only he and his uncle should remain for the interview, and the others retired. I then stated to Mir Haji that, provided he played straight with us in the future, we would overlook his past activity in the arms traffic, which had got to cease. Mir Haji replied that he had not been informed in previous years that the trade in arms was contrary to our wishes; but now that he clearly understood this, he was quite willing to assist us by denying facilities to the Afghans in obtaining arms from Masqat. He admitted that last season 20,000 to 30,000 rifles had been landed on the Biaban and Makran coasts; but assured me that not more than two consigments of 600 or 700 rifles had been landed in his territory this year, owing to the vigilance of our ships. It seemed hard to reconcile this statement with previous reports received by me; but at the same time I was very favourably impressed by his demeanour and apparent frankness, for he replied promptly to my queries about Afghans and other matters with no patent *arrière-pensée*. Our interview lasted a long time, and I understood from him that he had already several times sent messages to the Afghans to clear out of Sarzeh. They always replied they were going, but still remained, as many of their friends were at Sohar and Masqat, and Mir Haji conjectured they were awaiting consignments of arms from that side.

He acknowledged having seen Mir Barkat *en route*, and stated that that young man was con-

sumed with fear, and lurking 'mid the Behmadi Hills, ready to bolt for cover should there be any disposition on the part of the Daria Begi or us to seize him. Dadullah was with him, in spite of Barkat's promise to me to banish him from his territory. I asked Mir Haji, as a test question, whose rifles those were that we captured at Gaigan. He immediately replied they were the property of Ali Khan of Masqat, and this fact was common knowledge throughout Biaban, as also that Barkat had been commissioned by that dealer to sell them to the Afghans. At the close of the interview Mir Haji returned to the small camp we had pitched for him, and I informed him that he and his followers were to consider themselves our guests for the day, so ordered a sheep to be killed for them, and rice and other food to be placed at their service.

Next day Barkat sent in a message to me, asking what my orders were to him. I merely replied that so long as he remained in hiding with Dadullah I wished to have nothing to say to him, for he had failed to carry out his promise to me, and the matter rested with the Daria Begi, who was shortly expected at Jashk. The Governor arrived in the *Persepolis* the following morning, and sent a message ashore saying he would like to call on Colonel Whyte and myself in the afternoon. During the interview we made H.E. acquainted with events since his last visit to Jashk. He inquired after Barkat's behaviour, and was candidly informed that, in spite of that chieftain's promises to Admiral Slade, he was not playing straight, and in my opinion was absolutely untrustworthy, quoting instances. The Daria Begi replied that he had sent to Barkat to be present on his return from Chahbar, whither he was proceeding next day. I suggested to him that it would be advantageous if he could remain here, on his return, in order to meet the naval Commander-in-Chief, who was due back from Bombay shortly. The *Hardinge* was also absent from the Gulf, having gone to coal at Karachi; but I did not inform the Governor of this fact.

On leaving, the Daria Begi said he only expected to be absent a few days, but wished to get into communication with Saiyid Khan of Geh from Chahbar, and seemed pleased to hear of the action alleged to have been taken by that Sirdar for expelling the Afghans from his country. The two prisoners, Shahi and the "seedie," were handed over to the Daria Begi's "bluejackets," and removed by them to the *Persepolis* in the evening; and she sailed for Chahbar next morning.

Mir Kambar of Kuhistak arrived shortly after midday with about twenty men, and immediately came over to the station to see me. He was what might be described as a "hearty fellow," with an unusually deep and powerful

voice. Of medium height, strongly built, with beard and whiskers dyed red, he possessed an aquiline face with piercing eyes. He recounted in detail the wrongs he had suffered at Barkat's hands—his home destroyed while he was absent, and he himself forced to flee to the Minab district, where he had resided ever since. Now this man had not spoken to Mir Haji before he came in to see me, so there could have been no collusion between them, and yet in almost every particular he corroborated the information previously vouchsafed to me by Mir Haji—regarding landings on the Biaban coast this season—except that he placed the number of rifles in the two Sirik consignments rather higher than did Mir Haji. He also reiterated that Barkat Khan was responsible for the Afghans entering the country, by inviting them here, showing them suitable camping-grounds, pointing out the different routes through the hills to the coast, arranging for dhows, and so forth. At the end of the interview he, too, was informed that he and his followers would be entertained as our guests for the day, and a camp was arranged for him alongside that of Mir Haji.

The eagles were beginning to gather together, but the carcase had yet to be provided whereon they might feed. Portents proclaimed Barkat Khan as the likely victim of their feast.

V.

The "silent strangle-hold" of the Navy has not, perhaps, been dealt with in sufficient measure during the course of this narrative; but it is difficult to apprise, or relate in detail, the never-ceasing vigilance demanded from all ships employed in patrolling the long coast-line under consideration. It would be wearisome were I to endeavour to record one-tenth of the information received by me daily at Jashk from the numerous efficient sources now at my disposal for the rapid collection and transmission of intelligence. Much of this had to be passed on by wireless to the S.N.O. in the Gulf, and was picked up at the same time by other ships on their beats, who were thus enabled to take immediate steps to grapple with the situation brought to their notice. The result of frequent laconic remarks in my diary, "Navy informed," after the receipt of what seemed at the time important news, could only be tentatively guessed. But one could rest assured prompt action would be taken, and the intended enterprise by gun-runners probably checkmated.

The patrolling ships often visited Jashk in turn, and I was thus afforded the opportunity to make the acquaintance of their commanders, and

learn personally from them what the present disposition of their boats was, and how any given situation had been dealt with by them, and the result, in more detail than was possible by brief radio messages in cipher. That the Navy were having an onerous and hard time of it there could be no manner of doubt — particularly the crews of the ships' boats, who were dotted along hundreds of miles of an unfriendly coast. These were exposed to sun and glare by day; whilst uncomfortable nights were passed, sleeping on oars stretched across the thwarts, for ten days or so at a time. A stiff "shamal" in an open boat, too, added to the severe tests of seamanship to which they were subjected; and it was not always possible to run for shelter to a neighbouring creek or cove through the heavy surf on these occasions—especially when small parties of Afghans were known to be lying up for them to come within rifle-range of the shore —so they had to ride the storm as best they could. It is small wonder, then, that when these boats were picked up again by their ships, at the end of their tour, many of their officers and bluejackets had no seats to their trousers left, and were otherwise in a very dilapidated and almost indecent condition! Yet they loved the boat-work, preferred it to living aboard their parent ship, and were generally as "cheery as sand-boys" about their discomforts afloat.

On the principle, however, that prevention is better than cure, it seemed desirable that those who were mainly responsible for this traffic in arms should be tackled in their lairs, at the source of the evil. If by measures ashore we could sufficiently instil a wholesome dread of our power into the hearts of the Baluch sirdars, and others who assisted the Afghans in their nefarious trade, the conveyance of arms in dhows from the Arabian coast would certainly largely decrease, if not entirely subside. The very difficult task of the Navy in their endeavours to intercept the passage of arms across the sea would then, naturally, be greatly lightened. This, then, must be my excuse for dwelling somewhat more prominently on what was being done on land than what, meanwhile, there was never any cessation from at sea. Moreover, as my duties demanded my presence more ashore than afloat, I am not so competent to record the doings of the Navy in detail, as of events which came under my immediate purview. Peradventure some day a naval officer may be tempted to fill the void, and write his experiences at sea during these operations. They should be instructive and interesting reading.

That the operations so far conducted were creating dissensions among Afghans and Baluchis, between whom fighting had taken place in various districts, was all to our good; and this information was not only given to me by the Daria

Begi, but conveyed to me by several independent intelligence agents, and confirmed by both Mir Haji and Mir Kambar. Later, quite a considerable party of Afghans, homeward bound, were rounded up in a gorge, in retaliation for acts of violence perpetrated by them in their disappointed rage on the inhabitants, and were practically wiped out after a siege of some duration. All such occurrences led to the hope that, in future years, the Afghans might find the increasing difficulties in procuring arms from the Gulf hardly worth the labour, expense, and risk involved.

The prestige, too, of Barkat Khan appeared on the wane in his own district, where he was feared and loathed for his high-handed treatment of his subjects. Specific charges of his abominable cruelty, such as the gouging out of the eyes of those who offended him, were brought to my notice in a manner which admitted no doubt of the truth of these accusations. Indeed, several influential men of Barkat's village, anticipating that his sun had set, paid me secret nocturnal visits, and begged me to use my opportunity with the Daria Begi, on his return, to have Barkat removed. They were sick and tired of his machinations, and advanced the opinion that so long as he remained in Biaban, so long would he encourage Afghans to visit him in order to make money out of them, and his people would surely suffer in consequence.

Barkat had been instructed to be at New Jashk to meet the Governor of the Gulf Ports on his return from Chahbar, and now had the temerity to send a message to me, stating he was afraid to come in unless I would guarantee he was not seized by the Daria Begi. I replied that I was unable to say what that official's intentions were, as they had not been revealed to me, but that it ill became a Baluch chieftain to remain lurking in the hills like a robber. He came in next night, unknown to me, and Mirs Haji and Kambar reported the fact after dark. They were both very anxious that I should prevail on the Daria Begi to have Barkat deported to Bushire, and his territory handed over to Mir Kambar, when they would both furnish guarantees that no Afghans would enter the country in future, nor arms be landed on the Biaban coast.

This was entirely beyond my province; but I agreed to place facilities in the way of their boarding the *Persepolis* as soon as she arrived—and before Barkat if possible—so that they might first get the ear of the Governor. This was accordingly done on the morning of the 8th March, when B. conveyed a note to the Daria Begi from me in the station-boat, and took Mirs Haji and Kambar with him. I had asked H.E. that if Barkat visited him on the *Persepolis* he should retain him on board until after he had seen Colonel Whyte and myself at his promised call on us at

3 P.M. In B.'s presence both Mir Haji and Mir Kambar had opened their minds freely to the Daria Begi as to where the responsibility lay for the visit of Afghans to Biaban, and regarding also the ownership of the rifles destroyed by us at Gaigan.

Shortly after they left, Barkat went aboard, armed (as I afterwards learnt) with several thousand krans,[1] which had been collected the previous day on his behalf by Meshedi Abbas, and Muhtajim-us-Sultaneh, a Persian who had replaced Meshedi in charge of the Customs. The interview was a very lengthy one, and evidently resulted in the Daria Begi having swallowed the bribe; for Barkat was permitted to return to shore, and the Governor sent over his "mirza" (clerk) to us, stating he was very sorry, but a sudden attack of fever would prevent him paying us his intended call until next morning.

This was rather a "knock-out." Barkat was naturally elated at what he regarded as a signal victory for himself, and held forth in a loud tone of voice in the village, scoffing at the British for having brought his enemies to Jashk in the hope of confounding him. He even went so far in his jubilation as to endeavour to twit B., who was a witness of this outburst, which raised the ire of my assistant greatly. Mirs Haji and Kambar were sorely depressed at the turn events had taken, so I sent B. over to tell them that "the 'tamasha' [entertainment] was not all over yet."

Curiously enough, that same afternoon the down-mail arrived from Bushire with a letter to me from the acting-Resident. In this he gave me a few side-lights as to how the Daria Begi was being financed by the Persian Government in his high office. I was no longer surprised at the readiness of his Excellency to make a bit on his own when opportunity offered.

Early next morning the Daria Begi sent his "mirza" ashore to me again, saying he was just coming over to say "good-bye," as he wished to leave for Bandar Abbas at once. This was a bit thick; so I requested the "mirza" to inform his master that it would not be convenient for me to see him until 11 A.M., that the flag-ship was hourly expected at Jashk, and there were several important questions regarding the situation on the coast that required to be privately discussed with him. The crafty autocrat was trying to slip away alone and unobserved, but we were not taking any of it. It was then only 7.30 A.M., and the *Hyacinth* dropped anchor at 9. As the Admiral had remained at Bombay this trip, Captain Dick was ashore at 9.30, when I explained the whole position fully to him before the coming interview. On the arrival of the Governor, with Captain Dick's permission, I proceeded

[1] Persian coin of normal value of about 4½d.

straight to the point, and told him how Barkat had promised many things to the naval Commander-in-Chief, none of which he had observed, and quoted instances. His Excellency then remarked he supposed we desired Dadullah, Rahim Dad, and others to be produced; whereupon I replied he would be conferring far greater benefit to the country by removing Barkat Khan himself. Somewhat to our surprise, he immediately acquiesced, said he had heard of all his misdeeds, and would take him away with him, placing Mustapha Khan in charge of the country east of Kuh Mubarak, and Mir Haji in charge of Biaban.

This was highly satisfactory so far as it went, but I could not help suspecting there would be a catch in it somewhere. On leaving, His Excellency proceeded straight to the fort, where Mustapha, Barkat, Haji, and Kambar were awaiting his return. There some discussion took place between the Daria Begi and the chiefs, during which Barkat and Kambar nearly came to blows, and were with difficulty separated. This fracas over, the Daria Begi, addressing Mustapha, said: "You are to have Baluchi" (*i.e.*, the country from near the Sadaich river to Kuh Mubarak); and to Mir Haji, "you, Biaban." Turning to Barkat he continued, "And what is left for you?" Never at a loss, Barkat promptly replied, "I will go with your Excellency." "Yes," said the Daria Begi, "you will come with me; and I will provide for you in Minab, Bandar Abbas, or Lingeh." He then led the way to his boat, and so out to the *Persepolis*.

Meantime Barkat's followers were hanging about, not fully realising what had occurred. And it was not until Barkat's bedding, clothes, and few personal servants were sent for that the situation was thoroughly comprehended. Later, the Daria Begi appears to have summoned Mustapha and Mir Haji on board, and explained to them that Barkat was his "son," but unfortunately was regarded as an enemy by the British; so he was taking him with him. After the *Persepolis* had sailed, Mir Haji and Mustapha both reported to me that the Governor had omitted to present them with their "sanads" (or letters of authority). So the old boy had been cute to the end; but this trick I intended to scotch by cabling both to the acting-Resident at Bushire and to the Consul at Bandar Abbas, to make the Governor disgorge them. Moreover, it was most emphatically undesirable that Barkat should be installed at Minab, or anywhere else in these regions, by the Daria Begi; so the Resident was asked to prevent this by every means in his power.

The *Hardinge* had arrived from Karachi the previous day; and whilst all this entertaining business was taking place, the troops had been landed from her for purposes of exercise, some little distance

east of the station. Barkat's followers, consumed with the fear that they, too, were now to be rounded-up, hid their rifles under their garments, and fled in the direction of Old Jashk, by the shore track round the bay, accompanied by Shahi, whom the Daria Begi had released without any punishment at all.

On the departure of the *Persepolis* I sent for both Mir Haji and Mustapha, and spoke to them seriously about their future attitude towards this gun-running. Mustapha in particular was strongly cautioned, and he was candidly informed that we knew him to be a deep rogue, as were also his sons; for all their past misdeeds were noted in our records. He had therefore better watch very closely henceforth, or he might soon find himself in the same unhappy case as his younger brother. The man was a shifty old fox, but I judged him to be somewhat more easily cowed than Barkat.

Next morning the two chiefs came to me, accompanied by Mir Kambar, who had so far felt he had been left rather out in the cold. Mir Haji and Mustapha had each agreed to allot a portion of their extended territories to the control of Mir Kambar, and desired me to be a witness of this arrangement. I explained that, so far as I was concerned, the subject must be regarded as quite unofficial, since Mir Kambar held no "sanad" from the Daria Begi, but that the proposal appeared to do credit to all concerned. Mirs Haji and Kambar then set forth on the return journey to their homes, after each had been presented with a small sum of money to repay them the expenses to which they had been put on coming to Jashk.

The flag-ship had left for Lingeh shortly after the *Persepolis* sailed, and the *Hardinge* had proceeded to the neighbourhood of Sirik, as reports were current that the Afghans at Sohar intended to make a determined effort to get their arms across to the Biaban coast. Now that the season was beginning to draw to a close, they were evidently anxious to set off on their return journey to Afghanistan, but naturally did not feel disposed to leave in store so large a number of their rifles on the Arabian coast until the following cold weather. On the 14th March I received a letter from Mir Haji, saying that the Afghans were expecting two boatloads from Sohar, and asking us to look after them at sea. He would endeavour to prevent the arms being landed; but should he require assistance, he hoped we would be able to furnish it. This information was forwarded by radio to the S.N.O., with the suggestion that touch should be maintained with Mir Haji.

Several enigmatical radio messages were flying about at that period regarding events at Bandar Abbas which I could not quite fathom, not being in telegraphic communi-

cation with Captain Rae at that place. All I could gather for the moment was that trouble had broken out there, and it was not until the morning of the 15th March, when the flag-ship arrived and I was signalled to go aboard, that I learnt from Captain Dick what had occurred. The excitement had all been due to the Daria Begi having landed himself in difficulties there. Captain Dick showed me a message he had received from the commander of the *Sphinx* the previous day, the purport of which was that shortly after the departure of the flag-ship from Bandar Abbas on the 13th a wounded Persian was brought aboard the *Sphinx* (then stationed there) for medical treatment. The man had been shot in the shoulder, and reported a disturbance in the town. This was presently confirmed by a note from Captain Rae, who asked the *Sphinx* to stand by until it had subsided. Briefly, the facts were that the Daria Begi had taken up his residence in the Governor's house, accompanied by Barkat Khan. On the night of the 12th some 400 "tufangchis" (riflemen) belonging to a henchman of the Lari Saiyid had entered Bandar Abbas and attacked the Government building, in which the Daria Begi was then besieged. Eventually he bought off his assailants with a bribe of 500 "tomans" (then about £100), and the Laris withdrew again at sunset on the 13th. Apparently one man on each side was killed, and about nine or ten others wounded, and peace was once more proclaimed. A truly Persian episode.

Subsequent reports made it abundantly clear that Barkat, far from travelling as a prisoner, was being treated by the Daria Begi as an honoured guest, and he appears to have afforded much assistance to the Governor when they were besieged. Further, he was allowed to despatch messengers to his former subjects, calling on them to send armed men with all speed up to Bandar Abbas to enable him and the Daria Begi to deal with local troubles; and he stated in these letters that he was quite free and would soon be back again at Jashk. The Daria Begi, moreover, informed Captain Rae that several prominent people in Bandar Abbas had begged that Barkat Khan should be installed there as their Governor! But then—Oriental "diplomats" generally do have vivid imaginations.

Shortly after this farcical attitude of the Daria Begi towards Barkat had been disclosed, intelligence was received that Colonel Cox, the British Resident in the Gulf, was returning from leave, and was on board the sloop H.M.S. *Odin*, then *en route* to Masqat from home waters. I accordingly sent a radio message to the *Odin*, asking Colonel Cox if he could kindly spare me an hour or two by calling in at Jashk on his way to resume charge at Bushire, and was informed in reply that it was his intention to do so. He

arrived in his own steamer, the *Lawrence*, from Masqat in the early morning of the 20th March, and spent several hours ashore. I thus had the opportunity of reporting in some detail all that had occurred of late, and of discussing various pressing questions with him before he continued to Sirik.

The *Hardinge* had recently proceeded there again, and Colonel Delamain reported that Mir Haji was greatly concerned, as he had perused a letter from Barkat to his former followers, ordering them to bring as many armed men as possible to Bandar Abbas. Mir Haji stated that a party of forty men had already responded to Barkat's call, and others were following. He was extremely anxious also owing to the non-arrival of his promised "sanad" from the Daria Begi. Colonel Delamain was informed that the Resident would reach Sirik next morning, and go into all these matters on the spot.

After interviewing Mir Haji at Sirik, Colonel Cox proceeded to Bandar Abbas, and later sent me a radio message that the Daria Begi had given him the "sanads" for Mir Haji and Mustapha, which he was posting to me for delivery to them. Further, the Daria Begi had undertaken to ship Barkat to Bushire by the next day's mail; but the Resident was remaining at Bandar Abbas in the *Lawrence*, to make sure that he went. I informed Colonel Delamain accordingly, so that he could place Mir Haji's mind at rest. The British Minister at Teheran was also addressed by Colonel Cox regarding the desirability of having Barkat permanently removed from his former sphere of activity on the Biaban coast. The villain was eventually taken to Bushire by the Daria Begi, but some months later was apparently allowed to escape from custody. In the time of my successor he appeared again on the troubled scene, but that is another story.

On the 22nd March, Captain S. G. Craufurd, D.S.O., of the Gordon Highlanders, arrived at Jashk from India, to take over the duties of Naval Intelligence Officer, Persian Gulf, from me. I remained at Jashk for another five or six days, in order to place him *au fait* with everything concerning the work, and introduced him to the various characters referred to in these pages, and others besides, before finally handing over to him on the 27th, when I sailed in the cruiser *Proserpine* for Masqat. There I spent several days with Mr Holland at the British Consulate, waiting for the next mail. His assistance to me throughout the period under review, and to the Navy generally, had been immense; and a large share of the success which had attended our efforts was due to his unobtrusive and rapid conveyance of intelligence, and his skilful handling of the Sultan of Masqat under most difficult circumstances. I was able to utilise this opportunity also of getting into personal touch with A. again, who had provided Holland with much of the information that had

been cabled across to me at Jashk by the Consul. B. I had left with my successor at Jashk. Both had performed yeoman service, and their good work was brought to the notice of, and fully appreciated by A.H.Q. India on my return to Simla. I sailed from Masqat for Karachi by slow mail on the 30th March, calling at Chahbar, where I spent several hours with Major Raven, who also had been of great assistance in the system of intelligence which had been gradually built up along the whole of the Makran coast. A small portable wireless was to be installed at Chahbar shortly, which would enable him, too, to communicate news of an urgent nature direct to patrolling ships.

Although operations for the year had by no means yet terminated, still there remained but few weeks more in which the Afghans would be likely to continue their activities in the Gulf—during the present season. Already telegraphic messages from Kirman, Sistan, and other centres in the interior, had reported large caravans passing through, homeward bound. Such movements from the coast area had for some weeks past been reported to me by my own intelligence agents, and from various sources of information it was confirmed that a comparatively small proportion of the camels carried back arms. By far the greater number were loaded up only with merchandise in their place.

That the losses suffered by Afghans and Afridis during this season were great is emphasised by the subsequent attitude of the Adam Khel Afridis, in the vicinity of the Kohat Pass and Cherat. These border people of ours claimed that they alone had lost some three lakhs of rupees (£30,000) as a result of our actions in the Gulf, and brazenly demanded that this sum of money should be paid over to them as compensation! Another small frontier war was with some difficulty averted; but they did not receive their compensation. If so small a section of those who embarked on the enterprise lost so heavily, it may readily be inferred that, in the aggregate, tens of lakhs were lost to the adventurous Afghan spirits who had proceeded so far afield in quest of the rich treasure formerly so easily acquired. At the close of this season the actual captures made at sea and on land by our forces amounted roughly to about 12,000 rifles and about 1,500,000 rounds of ammunition; but it may be safely conjectured that probably another 30,000 or 40,000 rifles had been prevented from reaching Afghanistan and our border tribes—as intended—by the measures which had at last been adopted in order to check this serious evil.

The problem by which we were confronted was a delicate and difficult one, having regard to the international, as well as the British, outlook on this vexed question of Arms Traffic. As shewn, we had to act virtually alone, and in face

of scarcely veiled opposition; but our interests were more intimately and vitally affected than those of other nations. The start made had, however, proved a considerable deterrent to the trade from Masqat; but until some satisfactory agreements were arrived at with France, Persia, the Sultan of Masqat, and the Amir of Afghanistan, operations conducted during one isolated season would certainly not suffice to destroy the danger once and for all. As events demonstrated, such agreements were not easily obtained; and it fell to Britain's lot, therefore, to continue these very expensive, and particularly onerous and trying, operations for some years yet, before the naval forces in the Gulf could be reduced to normal dimensions, and the threat to our stability on the Indian frontier regarded as more or less dissipated.

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to give some idea of the complexity of the situation, to disclose the network of intrigue, and to prove the complicity of practically every chieftain and tribesman on the Arabian and Persian coastline in this trade. Its ramifications were widely distributed, and covered a huge tract of country. This demanded the employment of secret agents in India, Afghanistan, Arabia, and Persia, in order to unravel its intricacies, and to lay bare the machinations of those who utilised every form of device to hoodwink the opposition to the traffic, initiated by our Government. And these agents, be it remembered, ever carried their lives in their hands; for one false move, which might give them away, would probably result in their having their throats cut.

References—though all too superficial, I fear—have been made to the highly important part played by our vigilant naval forces in these long-drawn-out conflicts of wit. Most deservedly were their exertions rewarded in due course by a naval medal, with clasp, "Persian Gulf, 1909-1914"; whilst, at the close of the first season's operations here described, Admiral Slade was raised to the dignity of a K.C.I.E., and his capable and energetic subordinate, Capt. Hunt, R.N., of the *Fox*, awarded the C.S.I. for their tireless labours to defeat the gun-runners' activities.

H. H. AUSTIN.

THE RECENT EVENTS IN ULSTER.

BY J. A. STRAHAN.

My mother, who, like Charley's aunt, was no ordinary woman, had a theory by which she explained to her own satisfaction the difference in the fortunes of the two races, known as the Saxons and the Celts, in the United Kingdom, and more especially in Ireland. How far the so-called Saxons are really Saxons, and the so-called Celts are really Celts, did not concern her, and need not concern us: whatever their origins, the two races are sufficiently distinct and distinguishable. Her theory she summed up in this way: the cause of all the difference in the fortunes of the Saxons and the Celts is that the Saxon populace are never dangerously discontented till they have not got enough to eat, and the Celt populace are never dangerously discontented till they have.

My mother was always ready to support her theory both with wise saws and modern instances. She was, what so few of our pastors and masters are now, very well read in history, and could cite from it scores of examples from the story of the Irish Celts where a satisfied stomach was accompanied by a dissatisfied heart, and, as the logicians say, *vice versa;* her most notable example of the *vice versa* being, of course, the century following the Revolution, when for a whole hundred years the Irish Celt was hungry and contented. But none of her evidences for the theory seems to me so complete as that she did not live to see, the present condition of Ireland.

The outbreak of the great war meant to most of the civilised races a period of penury, sickness, sorrow, and death. Their men who had tilled the fields were dragged away to die on them; their women were left behind to raise what crops they could from the empty land, and to ponder in agony over the fate of their absent husbands, sons, and lovers; the children were half-starved, and dying in thousands through hunger, neglect, and disease. But to the Celts of Ireland the outbreak of the war was a blessing. Their men were not conscripted to fight: any of them who went to the war went merely because they liked fighting, which it must be admitted a considerable proportion of them do. Those who preferred peaceful pursuits continued to cultivate their fields as secure from danger as if no war existed. Not only so, but for everything which their fields produced they received double or treble the pre-war price. Never in the whole story of their race were they so well protected, so well paid, or in

such a condition of general prosperity. While all the other peoples of Europe were stinted, the smallest Celtic farmer in Ireland could keep his family in luxury and at the same time put money in the savings bank. But as his breakfast table and his bank balance went up his contentment went down. Fairly satisfied with things before the war, when his farm brought him only a bare living, he became fiercely dissatisfied when it brought him a bountiful subsistence. At last he could not stand this satisfactory state of things any longer, and he rebelled against it; and he has continued his rebellion against it—and will, if my mother's theory is correct, continue rebelling against it until the disorganisation of industry and markets in Ireland has once more reduced him to meagre rations. I must say, for my own part, I look to this for the restoration of order in Ireland more confidently than to the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act 1920, which happens to be enacted just about four years after it might have been useful.

While the Celts of Ireland were thus showing their intolerance of prosperity, their Saxon fellow-countrymen were acting very differently. The Ulstermen were also in a most favoured position. Their men were not liable to conscription; but though, unlike the Celts, they have no love of fighting for its own sake, they joined up by the tens of thousands—in such numbers indeed that many of them were afterwards sent back again to the shipyards and engineering shops, where their services were more needed by the State than at the front. Those who remained at home worked hard and were well satisfied with the prices their labour and produce brought. There was no discontent among them even when, as sometimes happened, their hours were longer and their wages lower than they thought was just. So long as the war was on they were satisfied to let these things stand over and to sacrifice their own rights to advance the rights of their country.

During the war a very considerable number of the advanced socialistic — perhaps Bolshevic would be more correct—ironworkers of Glasgow found their way to Belfast. Why they crossed the North Channel is not very clear, since wages were no higher and hours no shorter in Belfast than in Glasgow. Possibly the Conscription Act had something to do with it. At any rate, a considerable number of them came to the shipyards and engineering shops of Belfast, and there they, after their nature, set about trying to stir up trouble between the workmen and employers who had been for years past on the most friendly terms. During the war they made little progress. Their propaganda meetings were held on Sundays on the steps of the Custom House, Queen's Square and so little were these to the

satisfaction of their fellow-workers that not even police protection could always prevent their being broken up. But with peace things altered to this extent, that the majority of the men in the shipyards and engineering shops were made discontented with their hours and wages, and before long some forty thousand of them came out on strike. And when the strike died out some discontent survived. This led to the formation of a political labour party, which, with the aid of the Nationalists, has since made itself felt at both the Parliamentary and the Local Government elections.

Both the strike and the formation of this labour party were hailed by the English Liberal and Labour press with delight. The favourite contention of those papers had always been that the opposition of the Ulster Protestant populace was an artificial creation of the landlords and employers, astutely devised to prevent the small farmers and workmen of the North joining with those of the South in demanding land and labour and government reform throughout all Ireland. Now, they said, the workmen have broken loose from the control of the masters, and we shall see what we shall see. Well, they were right, and all have seen it who have eyes to see.

The fierce riots which have recently occurred in Ulster, and more especially in Belfast, were deplorable, but like many other things in themselves deplorable, they should be, if rightly understood, useful by way of correction and reproof. If they correct the delusion of these Liberal and Labour editors, who honestly entertain it, that the hatred of Home Rule felt by the Ulster workman is a creation of his employer, it will be good. If it opens the eyes of the English workman to the way in which he has been humbugged in the matter, it will be better. But we cannot be sure it will have either result. Few of the editors honestly believed in the delusion: they only worked it up to humbug the English working man. And the English working man does not appear to resent being humbugged by his instructors. During the negotiations which preceded the first Home Rule Bill, Mr Labouchere was the liaison officer between Mr Parnell and the Liberal leaders. Once he brought to Sir William Harcourt a new demand from the Irish chief. "Tell him I refuse," said Sir William angrily: "I will eat no more dirt." Mr Labouchere looked surprised. "Indeed," he said; "you have eaten so much lately that I thought you had got to like it." And possibly the English working man has been so much humbugged by his instructors of late that he has got to like it.

Let us now shortly consider the origin of the lamentable disturbances in Ulster, and especially in Belfast where infinitely the worst occurred. At first the Ulster Loyalist had a sneaking liking for the Sinn Feiners. All along he was con-

vinced that the only thing the Irish Nationalists wanted was separation from the British Empire. When their leaders and their newspapers talked of Home Rule within the Empire he simply regarded them as lying: what they wanted was Home Rule as a step towards separation. Accordingly when the Sinn Feiners declared that their object was separation, he recognised them as in their way honest men; and, being honest men, he liked them and felt they were men with whom it was possible to deal: if they agreed to accept something less than separation they would probably keep to their agreement. But so soon as the system of murder was established his liking for the Sinn Feiners came to a sudden end; and when that system had extended to the frontier counties of Ulster fierce dislike took its place. That dislike rose to fury when Colonel Smyth, a gallant fellow-Ulsterman, who had shown his loyalty to the Empire by facing its enemies in the field, and his loyalty to Ireland by facing her assassins behind the hedges, was murdered at Cork in broad daylight while sitting in his own club. His fury over this was further fired when he heard that the Sinn Feiners had refused to permit Colonel Smyth's body to be brought back to Ulster by train; and that it had to be conveyed by private motor-car in order to be buried in his native place by the graves of his fathers.

In their rage the Ulster Loyalists resolved that they would work no longer side by side with avowed sympathisers with the perpetrators of such crimes. This resolution was first adopted by the workmen employed in the great shipbuilding yard of Harland & Wolff. This fact is to be noted for two reasons. It was here that the late strike of the iron-workers began, and that the new political labour party originated; and, in the second place, the head of Harland & Wolff is Lord Pirrie, the leading capitalist and employer in Ulster who is at once a Radical and Home Ruler.[1] The workmen of the firm are nine-tenths of them Protestants, or, as the 'Westminster Gazette' in a moment of candour described them, Scotchmen, which, I suppose, means of Scottish blood; but among the remainder were some avowed and truculent Sinn Feiners. The Loyalists told these men they must leave the yard. Most of them left quietly enough, but some drew revolvers and shouted, "Up, the rebels!" and they were forcibly removed. When work was over and the Loyalists were returning home, some of them had to pass through what are now called Catholic, but what used to be called Irish,

[1] It was another member of this great firm, the Rt. Hon. A. M. Carlisle (a brother-in-law of Lord Pirrie's), who, on 9th August, when the Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill was being discussed in the House of Lords, interrupted the debate by calling out from the steps of the throne, "My lords, if you pass this Bill you may kill England, but you shall not kill Ireland!"

quarters, and there they were furiously assailed with sticks, stones, and pistols. The Loyalists retaliated, and so for several days something very like civil war convulsed the working-class districts of Belfast.

The Liberal and Labour papers have been at some pains to explain these proceedings to the satisfaction of their readers. Some of the bolder of them stand firmly by their old theory, that they, like every other opposition to Nationalism, were the work of the capitalists and employers. I suppose it was a further development of their devilish astuteness which led them to start the thing among men employed by a Radical and Home Ruler. Others weep over them as the manifestation of that religious intolerance which is supposed to be characteristic of Ulster Protestants. This is hardly consistent with the fact that some of the men first ejected from the shipyards were not Catholics. It is still less consistent with the pledge which the Loyalists insist that all their fellow-workers must sign. That pledge makes no reference to religion. All that the pledge requires is a declaration of loyalty to the King, and of abhorrence of political murders and political strikes. What state of mind must an editor be in who declares it is a workman's natural right to refuse to work on the same job with a man who is not registered as a trade unionist, and who denounces as brutal tyranny the conduct of a Loyalist who declines to work side by side with a man who will not sign a pledge against treason and murder?

The fact, of course, is that the Ulster opposition to Nationalism, whether right or wrong, is essentially a working-class opposition. If, as I have before written, it had depended on the landlords and employers, it would have broken down long before this. In the South and West of Ireland there is no Protestant working-class worth mentioning. The Protestants there are composed practically only of landlords and employers. The result is, we have them constantly calling out for a settlement, now of one kind and now of another, which the Protestants of the North will not look at. In the same way Catholic landlords and employers are very moderate in their Nationalism: it is the labourers and small farmers who are, and have always been, calling out for separation. The hopelessness of the situation in Ireland is that both in the South and the North it is the working people who dictate policy, and that the policy in each case is the offspring of their racial, religious, and traditional hatreds and affections.

And, if rationally considered, the late disturbances in Ulster will prove what a service to law and order was rendered by those who, when the third Home Rule Bill was before Parliament, organised the Ulster Volunteers. That service consisted in putting the Protestant youth of Ulster

under discipline. That youth were filled with the most passionate hatred of the Bill, which in their view was to hand them over, bound hand and foot, to the mercy of their hereditary enemies. Those enemies were openly and loudly exulting over the prospect of any opposition to their rule being put down in blood by the British army. If things had been left to themselves, this state of feeling would have resulted in sporadic outbursts of violence all over the province, to which the recent disturbances would be child's play. Something like this happened when the first Home Rule Bill was under consideration, although everybody was then pretty confident that it would not pass. What would have happened if Ulster opposition had been unorganised when the third Home Rule Bill did pass is too terrible to contemplate. And it was from this that the organisation of the Ulster Volunteers saved the country.

It saved it by putting the resistance to the Bill under the direction of cool-headed and responsible men. Instead of leaving tens of thousands of excited youths to act as their feelings moved them, they were brought together and placed under military discipline. That discipline forbade any of them to act on his own initiative, and it was strictly enforced. They were all pledged to resist the putting into operation of the Home Rule Act, if necessary at the cost of their lives. But how and when that resistance was to be made was to be decided by their leaders, and by them alone. As a result the Home Rule Bill was discussed again and again, and finally passed; and yet not a stone was thrown by a Loyalist from one corner of Ulster to the other.

I myself was an eye-witness to how that discipline operated. I was staying in the most Scottish part of County Antrim, with a relative who is a county magistrate. At breakfast one Sunday morning my relative received a police message to come at once to a certain village, as there was likely to be trouble there. I accompanied him in his car to the village. We found that during Saturday to Sunday night a band of Nationalists had come down from their cabins in the mountains, and had broken every pane and every sash in the windows of the Presbyterian Church. When the farmers and their families arrived for morning service, a cry went up among the young men to follow the desecraters to their homes and exterminate them. The young men all belonged, however, to the Volunteers, and several of their officers were present; and these peremptorily forbade any attempt at revenge. Their orders were implicitly obeyed; and the farmers and their families proceeded peacefully to perform their services to God, with the winds of winter blowing about their heads through the paneless and sashless windows of their church.

Just after the Ulster Volunteers had accomplished their purpose, and Mr Asquith had declared, what he might with advantage have announced sooner, that the coercion of Ulster by force was unthinkable — a good many people about him had been thinking of it once and talking of it too —the great war broke out, and the Volunteers joined up and formed the famous Ulster Division. Many of them never came back, many came back crippled for life, and many came back to find that in their absence their jobs had been taken by Sinn Feiners. The last was a grievance dwelt on bitterly by the shipbuilders who ejected the Sinn Feiners from the shipyards. They had ceased to be the thoroughly organised and disciplined body they were in 1914. If they had been what they then were, there would have been no riots either at Derry or at Belfast.

Some fair-minded persons, while admitting the service the organisers of the Ulster Volunteers rendered in this way, may still think that they rendered a greater disservice by their arming the people to resist the law by force. It was this, they argue, which led the Nationalists also to organise and arm their volunteers, which was the cause of the subsequent rebellion and the present state of war in the South and West of Ireland. Such a view indicates either ignorance or disregard of Irish history. Every Nationalist movement for centuries past has followed the same lines: it begins as a moderate claim led by moderate men, and it ends in a demand for independence led by armed extremists. Such was the first volunteer movement. At first its claim was for freedom of legislation and trade, and its leaders were Grattan and Charlemont; in the end its claim was independence secured by rebellion, and its leaders were Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Theobald Wolfe Tone. O'Connell's constitutional claim for Repeal of the Union in the same way changed into the Young Ireland movement and another rising. The Pope's Brass Band, with its leaders on the Treasury Bench, developed in time into the Fenian conspiracy with its leaders in Richmond Prison. Mr Parnell kept the physical force party under control longer than any other leader. That was due partly to his marvellous strength of character, and partly to his constantly assuring the party that he did not, whatever he said in Parliament, mean that Home Rule was to be the boundaries of the nation's progress. When he went, it was only a matter of time and opportunity when the physical force party would tire of the talkers and resort to action. The time, to sensible observers, was pretty near before the war broke out; the outbreak of the war supplied the opportunity.

This, then, is the state of affairs in Ireland as they stand revealed by the Ulster riots. There are a populace in the South and West who are resolved to have separation, and

are ready to kill right and left to secure it. There are a populace in the North who are resolved not to have separation, and are ready to die to prevent it. This seems a situation which does not lend itself to easy solution. Not so, thinks the Labour Party, a deputation of which went over to the distressful country lately to find a remedy for all her woes and this remedy, which the statesmen of Great Britain have been vainly seeking for seven hundred years, it discovered in seven days—and yet Mr Winston Churchill says the Labour Party is not fit to govern! The remedy was simplicity itself, in fact as simple as the deputation: it was just to disarm the police and withdraw the soldiers and let the people settle their troubles themselves. Before this remedy was well announced the leading men of both the Loyalists and Nationalists were denouncing the English Government for not providing sufficient forces to prevent their followers killing one another!

It is always an honest and usually a wise policy for a nation to stand by its friends. In the case of Ireland it seems also to be England's only possible policy. All sane Englishmen see that separation is impossible: geography, which no policy can alter, prevents it. The Irishmen opposed to separation are the Protestant populace of the North, who are the only friends in Ireland of England and the Empire. If there be any wisdom, not to mention honesty, still left in English counsels, England will stand by them.

Those Englishmen who wish to salve their consciences for not standing by them always insist that the so-called loyalty of Ulstermen is conditional loyalty—that is, loyalty on their own terms. That may be so. There are few things, if any, absolute in this world, not even, as we have been discovering lately, those very real things, time and space. It would be strange then if the Ulstermen's loyalty were absolute; but, so far as my experience has gone, the only condition they attach to it is that if they are loyal to Englishmen, Englishmen must be loyal to them. It does not seem on the face of it an altogether unreasonable condition, and certainly it is one the breach of which will be bitterly resented: there is no resentment so passionate as that of a betrayed friend. And it so happens that once upon a time the Ulsterman thought he had been betrayed by England. That was in the middle of the eighteenth century, when he was being evicted from the farms which his fathers had won from the wilderness, and was being persecuted for belonging to that religion which his fathers had died to protect. The effect of that betrayal on his loyalty was afterwards shown in the Irish Rebellion and the American Revolution. In the Irish Rebellion of 1798, the Ulstermen for the first time joined the Southerners in a furious insurrection against England. It will be England's fault if it is not the last time.

"AN EDICATED BLOKE."

BY A. J REYNOLDS.

As we moved into the lagoon, up some tributary of which we expected to find the headquarters of an almost lost exploring and prospecting party, a gust of wind — one of those sudden squalls that sweep down in October from the rocky peaks of the mountains in the Nigerian hinterland — sent the launch over until her gunwale lay flush with the water. I seized the railing of the bridge and watched the blurring of the mirror of water beneath us as the ripple of air passed across it, distorting my features as they lay on its hitherto placid surface. With the dulling of the water and blotting out of my own reflection, vanished the last reminder of the mood of kindness which the torpid air of Nigeria can sometimes be said to possess. The only suggestion left was menace.

Fierce little wavelets beat in impotent fury against the side of the launch, or curled under her forepart as she lifted her angry disdaining little head above them. The flying clouds stooped lower until they hid the head of the mount from our view, and sent the "boys" scudding below.

We proceeded down a monotonous creek with our Nubia pilot shouting instructions to his crew through the gathering mist; one moment we seemed to be running into nothing less than a wall of rock, and the next we would eddy into the centre of the stream.

Aroused from a spell of gloomy speculation by the temperature of the rain which beat down through the neck-band of my shirt, I went below and put on a rainproof coat. The little vessel was pitching uneasily, but answering willingly to the helm in the hands of the pilot; as I opened the door a sudden pitch pulled it out of my hands and sent it crashing back against my berth-rail, causing me to start as if shot.

In accepting leadership of the relief expedition, I had done violence to some misgivings as to my ability to accomplish the object of the expedition, and to take seniority over so many men who were old enough to be my father; the youngest among them could have given me fifteen years at least, but the duties of my party seemed light, and besides, as the foreman of the party said, I was "an edicated bloke."

The members of the main party described themselves as young and untrained. Seeing this, I daren't describe myself at all. The Agent-General on the coast, in urging me to accept the leadership, had told me that my presence would exercise an influence

over them and stand as a guarantee that all was above board at headquarters, as it was from there I came.

I had no good reason to believe that the party was in trouble. I knew little about its composition beyond what had been told me by the Agent-General before leaving Lagos, who had added, that possibly the leader was a man of theory rather than action, and might have chosen to confide the charge of one party to a man named Oxley who was, added the Agent, "greatly distinguished at college in athletic sports." Of course there was material for speculation in this official opinion, that a subordinate member of the party was considered as good a man at the practical side of things as his chief, and at first thoughts it suggested a possible division of interests and effort, but it did not necessarily indicate a hitch in the operations of the expedition.

A call from the pilot at the helm aroused me from my reverie, and some one touched me on the shoulder.

"This is where we land, sir; the captain advises lying to for the night."

In fact, we were now near the source of the river; it meandered on for another mile or two, but then suddenly dried up or was lost in the arid lands, and certainly the soundings had shown that there wasn't sufficient depth of water to take our craft any farther with safety.

"We'll follow the captain's instructions," I replied. "I don't take charge until we land."

The captain approached, and I suggested the firing of a gun. The captain gave the order, and as it exploded it produced an extraordinary effect among the hills, and then merged into a sound that spread far across the country, and seemed to an imaginative mind to be tumbling over itself in reverberating waves in its efforts to get away from its starting-point.

Our gruff old captain was gazing straight ahead, with his glasses to his eyes.

"See anything?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, "seems to be something putting off in a canoe." I knew well how to look for it, and yet it was some moments before I could discern the black speck in the midst of the immense wilderness; it was set near the foot of a cliff which looked like the forefoot of an immense cloud-weighted hill which lay behind it; the great wastes of barren earth in which it stood enhanced its insignificance. I went forward to the forecastle deck where the members of the party were standing.

A few minutes passed, and the canoe turned out to be manned by a solitary native fisherman, who ran his canoe towards the bank upon observing us, and scrambling ashore, sank his canoe by the edge of the water, and retreated inland.

That night at "chop" we were disturbed by a cry from the watch on deck of "Who's there?" followed by a reply which we couldn't distinguish.

Tumbling up on deck we were surprised to hear proceeding from our port quarter the unmistakable notes of the European voice, mingled with a slight touch of another accent which blended with it, which though now seeming familiar to my ear, just as quickly lost itself to my perception.

"What was that?" called the captain.

"Couldn't say, sir. I only caught the words 'old chap.'"

"You've been asleep."

As the watchman commenced his denial of the insinuation, once again the cry broke out. This time I distinctly heard the words "old chap" myself.

"He's right enough," I replied, "but they come from a great distance—seems to be more than one shouting."

The captain's face lit up. "It's an echo," he cried, "and we're probably nearer to the party than we imagine; get a megaphone," he called to the watch, "and send a hail—then fire the gun."

After the echoes of the gun had died away, we listened intently for an answer, but strain our ears as we would, not as much as a whisper disturbed the air.

Next morning we were up with the sun, and after breakfast got out the launch's gig and pulled ashore, making for the foot of the hill that sloped from the water's edge. After a short scrutiny we began the ascent, with the object of thoroughly scanning the surrounding country from its summit in the hope of locating the overdue party. The scramble up the mount took us nearly half the morning—the going was comparatively easy, but we stopped for observations several times; at last we reached the summit, or as near as would do for our purpose. Although we weren't more than three thousand feet above the river level, yet we were so remote from the world that our sense of isolation was complete: the inhabited world lay at our feet, but we stood on a different planet removed from it by undreamt-of space; the turmoil of the elements about us intensified the indescribable majesty of that stupendous reach. Over the higher foothills to the north-east piled a dense copper-coloured haze—a dust-storm from the plains—for already the sun had completely dried the ground after the previous night's drenching, but to the east we simply gazed into space itself. I never knew until then what space meant; I stood on an overhanging pinnacle of rock, and by looking straight ahead seemed to be as far away from the earth as I was from the sky.

Our journey to the hill proved abortive; we didn't even catch sight of the fisherman of the previous evening, although we could see farther than any man was capable of travelling in the between times. Upon our return to the launch we held a consultation, and decided to go in search of the exploring party immediately. The rainy season was

just over, and with the exception of a few small tornadoes we didn't expect much in that line. Our first course of action was to retreat to the lagoon which we had forsaken the previous day, as we weren't certain how long the river which we were then in would hold sufficient water for flotation, and we had no wish to get stranded in case of a drop in its level.

The following day, the Assayer, one of the machine-operators, and myself, with thirty carriers and three hardy little horses, started due east; along with these we took a further thirty carriers to do the rough and heavy work of the first few days' march, intending to send them back upon the third day, so leaving our main party of ten nearly as fresh as when we started.

The first day's march wasn't more than ten miles, as none of us were in fit condition for great exertions after our long cramping in the limited space of the launch; that night's camp fire was of dried brush-wood which lay in profusion everywhere. The next night camp was pitched after covering about fifteen miles, and our fire was the same as our first night, as wood was still plentiful.

By the third night we were a good forty miles into the heart of semi-arid country with very little timber; occasionally we came across water, just sufficient to meet our needs; it was of a very brackish flavour, slightly tinctured with alkali, and had collected in old pits made by the natives when digging for tin. Next morning we parted with our extra carriers. About the third hour's march we saw the last of them as they were lost to view in the waist-high brush. Most of us were now complaining of sore eyes as a result of the constant staring at the dreary unchanging ground; the blinding hot sun shone upon the particles of sand which reflected into our eyes like the light from a burnished mirror, and after the cool green shade of the forest creeks we found it very trying.

About the fifth day there was a general improvement in our eyes, and the first soreness wore off. We expected to come across signs of the party towards the seventh day, or the eighth at latest. That day saw a betterment in our eyes, but not in our tempers. All that afternoon I noticed a surliness amongst the carriers, which I first of all attributed to the loss of their companions; next day was like the last, only worse; early and all as it was in the progress of the expedition, things began to assume a killing monotony. A deep brooding silence came over the carriers, and they seemed to take the spirit of the place to their very hearts.

Upon the sixth day the sun rose as usual in her early morning copper garment, gradually changing to her midday blinding gold. By midday the obsession of the trail began to master our senses, and towards the afternoon, in one spell of stillness which could almost be felt, a

mirage spread screens of fantasy out for our entertainment — curious cliffs, odd-shaped mountains, inverted palms were displayed in an attraction of colour that was never seen outside a Turner painting in water-colours. Nothing changed materially as the horizon moved — we moved, but we took our landscape with us. We were like children walking inside a large hoop, and kicking it forward as we stepped. Not a breath of wind escaped from the cloudless sky: we were alone in a lifeless world; we had pushed beyond the habitat of all creatures, ever onward into the still wastes; with eager eyes we searched the dusty plains of silence, but there was no speck of life to grace the burnt brown run of death. By the seventh day the mirages became too common to deceive even our shattered discriminating faculties: night descended upon us dewless and dreary, and we turned in to sleep with aching heads and sore limbs after the toil and labour of the day.

Towards morn on the eighth day the landscape changed with almost theatrical suddenness — strange odd-shaped hills, abrupt and rugged, cropped up on either hand. That evening, before we had decided upon our night's camping-ground, we ran across a herd of hump-backed cattle with a Filani herd. He was questioned in Hausa, and he turned out to be a deserter from the camp of the party of which we were in search, whose whereabouts he indicated by simply pointing to the east, and muttering, "Chung" (there). We tried to induce him to accompany us, but, judging by his obvious reluctance to our company, we concluded that he hadn't been too well treated by his late employers, and had had already quite sufficient of men of our colour. Upon rounding a small hill we were greatly surprised to find that we had reached the end of our journey, for there, not two miles away, glistened a sheet of water, surrounded by dried grass, exactly similar to the veldt grass of South Africa, and set a few yards from the water's edge a couple of huts; even at that distance the unmistakeable work of white men.

The sheet of water turned out to be a dam built to hold back the water for tin-sluicing. A wild yell of delight left the throats of our "boys" as if by mutual consent, and each man quickened his pace unconsciously. I thought that the shout would have instantly brought to the open any persons who might have occupied the huts, but we were less than a hundred yards from them before any one appeared. Even then the indifference and boredom of the solitary figure was so apparent that it was almost sufficient to make one turn back immediately. Presently the figure began to roll as if drunk. We discovered it was one of the least important members of the party, not necessary to describe here, who had been left behind by the

others while they went on an exploring expedition up the river, which ran into the dam from the eastern end. He expected them back almost any moment, in fact had taken our shout for theirs, and therefore didn't trouble to hurry himself. As he explained matters, my eye suddenly caught something moving on the water's surface just under the shadow of an overhung growth, and next moment a dug-out canoe, holding five men, came into view. Directly they sighted us they rent the air with a shout which made the rest of our party turn round, and instantly began jabbing the water so furiously with their paddles that the small canoe began to roll. Not possessing the balance of the native born to the unstability of the craft, I could see that they were in jeopardy, for two of them had to drop their paddles and begin to bail.

Making all allowances for the eagerness of men who have spent a couple of years in isolation to greet friends from home, I found myself a little impatient at their recklessness. However, they came alongside without accident, and one by one left the craft. A man in a blue shirt, with green neckcloth, came first; his beard and hair were red. Standing in front of my party, I held out my hand to greet him, but he turned to wait for his comrades, and not until all four men had landed did he come forward.

There seemed to be something odd in this. My first words were of inquiry, and seemed to bring a look of anxiety into each face; the man in the blue shirt answered that there had been no accident of any kind.

"We are all safe as far as we know," he said. "The doctor is away on a trip to the east with all the 'boys' we had left but one, and he has now deserted us."

"So you have had sickness amongst the boys?" I asked. "Any deaths?"

"Yes, sir," he replied. "You see it's like this—blackwater broke out amongst them all together, but we couldn't induce them to let the doctor see them, as they said that what medicine was good for white man no be good for black man; they refused to take it, and all died with the exception of five, who are at present away with the doctor, not counting the deserter."

He spoke readily, as if anxious to share some news which was too much for him to carry alone. I replied as cheerfully as I could, and inquired about the rainy season.

While one of my "boys" was getting out some liquor comforts, I took a closer look at them: except for one who was standing farther away from us, they all seemed very much alike. He was obviously still a lad, not more than twenty-two years old, and attracted my attention because of his boyish appearance; the others were heavier and darker, and evidently none of them had put scissors

to hair or beard for a couple of months. This surprised me greatly, as it is a very unusual thing in a land where it is of the utmost difficulty to keep the head clean unless the hair is kept short.

A second glance at their faces showed me the cause of it. I should have noticed it sooner but for the fact that the hair on their faces concealed a pair of hollow and emaciated cheeks in each case, and I knew that the terrible lifeless feeling left behind as a reminder by malaria was accountable. I therefore understood how they must have felt as they kept putting it off and off from time to time, as only those who dwell in the tropics can understand. The man in the blue shirt was bigger and burlier than his comrades, and evidently older, and as I noticed this I had the impression that all of them looked older than I expected to find them.

The boyish-looking lad finished a sentence, and his lips closed in a straight line while a line ran down from the side of each nostril, making his mouth triangular.

"Yes," he was saying; "in August we had it one hundred and twenty-five in the shade, and it rained for six weeks without a break."

"That's bad," I said. "Much sickness?"

"We all had malaria, but the natives had blackwater as well; it was then they died."

By this time the steward had seen the cases opened and some wine produced; we accordingly adjourned to one of the huts to drink it.

When they had filled up, I began—

"Well, gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to meet you and have the opportunity to toast the success of the expedition. Let us drink to the safety of you all, including the doctor, who is not amongst us. I suppose, judging by appearance, this is Mr Oxley sitting on my left, but I cannot name the others. However, that will come with acquaintance. Here's to the hea——"

The moment I had spoken Oxley's name I had smiled down at my neighbour; but I had no answering smile, and suddenly the glass was crushed to atoms between his fingers. He stared stupidly at the litter of glass and wine as the others sprang to their feet. Suddenly he banged his hand down upon the table.

"What made you think I was Oxley?" he rasped. "My name is Phœnix!"

This outburst was as disconcerting as his action had been. But I made shift to blurt out some words of apology, and the young boyish-looking one jumped up, and seizing Phœnix's cut hand, led him into another apartment of the hut to have it bandaged.

I immediately attributed the outburst on the part of Phœnix to liver, knowing the feeling of unreasoning irritability that can be produced

by constant doses of intermittent fever, and how easy it is to upset men by the merest trifles after the rains. I resolved to think no more about it, and to try and smooth matters over by toasting him as soon as he returned. As I was filling my glass the boy returned, but without Phœnix. A footfall outside told me that Phœnix had found his way out through some door which probably led out of the other apartment, but as yet unknown to us.

Almost immediately he began to speak.

"Of course we should have told you who we are, sir. Mr Phœnix is our chief, the rest of us are Welsh Hughes—beg pardon—Mr Hughes—Mr Penn, Mr Tearle, and Dr O'Dea, who is away; and there's myself, my name is Ford, sir."

"Six," I tallied mentally, and noticed his eagerness to get into conversation, while looks of anxiety passed from face to face as he spoke. He was about to continue, but I interrupted.

"That's only six," I said; "there should be seven." As I mentioned this every man stirred uneasily on his seat, and judging by their looks, none of them envied Ford his job of explaining.

"You see, sir, Mr Oxley wasn't here when you called; he—he isn't always here." He spoke with the ease of a man accustomed to drawing-rooms, and his manner was infectious after the embarrassment of the meeting. I then presented the members of my party, and a sort of freedom and conviviality ensued, which was just the sort of thing I desired.

"How was Oxley all this time?" I inquired.

"I think he was anæmic," he said. "His voice had wavered perceptibly, and his lips turned very blue. You see, we were all anæmic," he hastened to add. "We couldn't get any exercise, and the rain and thunder was maddening; one thunderstorm seemed to last for nearly a week. That made the house a queer place, sir," he continued, with a more confident freedom. "We could do nothing but sleep, and used to feel too tired even to eat. You see, sir, we have nothing to read but a few old books, and we read those so many times, and got so sick of them, that at last we tore them up, because we knew them so well that we always knew what was coming next, and besides, the colour of the covers used to annoy Oxley. We had nothing to break the monotony but walk about from one room to another, and as one was bound to want to walk while the other was sleeping, this always caused annoyance; and besides, sir, everybody thought that everybody else wanted to sleep in any room but the one he occupied; so we all changed, and then found we couldn't stand it, and had to change back again. Oh! sir, can't you see it was the rain—the constant beating of the rain

on our roof—it was maddening; and the thunder—*it* never stopped."

"Did you try nothing in the shape of concerts?" I inquired.

"We did, sir," he replied. "But——"

"Did Oxley ever take part in them?"

"Oh yes. Oxley could sing all right — in fact, I liked listening to him; but one evening he wanted to sing a song with four verses, and the fellows didn't like it."

"So you quarrelled?" I ventured.

"Well, no, sir, not exactly that; but you see everybody else only sang one-verse songs, and besides, sir," he added, "we all had pains in our heads from the fever and quinine."

"Used he to put on what is called 'side'?" I inquired.

"Yes, sir, that's just it, only I didn't like to say so," he replied in the manner of one finding relief at the completion of a job which he expected difficulty in beginning. "You see, he was a university chap and had college ways, and used to want to shake hands with the fellows on any special occasion, and used to say 'old chap'."

Just as he spoke, as if in echo to his last words, came the cry of "old chap," clear and distinct on the night air.

Instantly the recollection of having heard it before crossed my mind, and I glanced at Ford; his face had gone ashen grey, and the faces of the rest of the men had taken on a similar hue. I could see that he was completely unnerved, and forbore to question him further that night.

So bidding them all come and join us at "chop," I left the hut just in time to get a wash before dinner was announced by the steward.

It was with a head heavy with protest against the men who could not show a little more tolerance to one in the same boat as themselves that I lay upon the bed that night, and who through their actions had driven one of their scanty number out into that desolation of desolations. But I slept soundly on the thought that I would see him next morning; and awaked about six.

As I started towards the hut a figure came out to meet me, and introduced himself as the doctor, and expressed regret that he wasn't present when I arrived.

I expressed a desire for a walk, and the doctor agreed to accompany me; we returned just in time for breakfast. As I went into their hut I met Penn. I had the impression that he wasn't pleased to see me.

"Good morning," I said. Up to this time I hadn't taken much notice of him, but at the thin dry "'n'morning" which he returned me, I took a second look at him. "How do you do?" I responded, and held out my hand. He gave my hand what I thought was a very flabby handshake. I looked

him up and down in the full sunlight, and saw that he was leaner than the others, and a retreating chin and receding forehead gave him an unpleasantly simian appearance.

"Well," I inquired, "have you read your home letters yet?" Penn glanced furtively at me before he answered. "No, I was looking for Mr Oxley."

"You get to work early, I see," I replied.

"It's not that; I wasn't looking for him for that." Again he gave me that furtive glance.

"Oh!" I replied. "Won't it wait until breakfast; he'll be here by then; don't let me detain you." He pulled one of the letters out of the breast pocket of his shirt and glanced at it. Something in his action drew my gaze to his eyes, and I wasn't surprised to notice that his eyes, instead of looking down towards what was in his hand, were peering out of the corners of their sockets at me. He gave a little chuckle.

"I don't think they'll find Mr Oxley."

I took another glance at him in the hope of seeing something significant, but his eyes were now on the letter.

"Why not?" I asked, and I felt my voice betray the anxiety that I was anxious to hide. He was not disturbed by that, however, and he answered just as before—

"Because there was a row with Mr Oxley, and we aren't on speaking terms with him."

It was a confirmation of my forebodings, but coming from him it didn't seem serious.

I determined to refrain from questioning him further, but a glance out of his shifty eyes showed me that he was hoping to be further questioned.

He had the unbearable air of one who believes himself to be master of the situation, and I turned and walked as far as my own cooking fire. It was now near eight o'clock, and already the heat of the sun was awful.

"I may mention," began a voice behind me, "that we all found Mr Oxley unbearable."

The voice was as dreary as a tombstone epitaph, and I listlessly wondered if Oxley hadn't found some one else unbearable.

"You may like to know," insisted the voice, "that Mr Phœnix was almost as implacable as any one."

"The Chief?" I asked, turning about—"didn't the Chief speak to him either?"

He shook his head.

"Nor the doctor?"

"No."

"Then who did speak to him?"

"No one."

"How long has this gone on?"

"Since May."

It was a little more serious than I had expected. If the man was telling the truth, and remembering Phœnix's behaviour and Ford's beating about the bush, I was convinced that, however great the exaggeration, the man was not quite lying. It now took on a

bewildering importance. Then the query presented itself to my mind—what effect had this grotesque non-intercourse upon Oxley? The problem enlarged so threateningly that I determined to ask the doctor next, but he met my opening question from the door with the announcement that breakfast was ready.

During the meal I met all the men together, and was not surprised to notice that Oxley was not there; their faces were pallid with fever and sleeplessness, and they gave me the most perfunctory of greetings. There was little or no conversation; so I got time to hastily review the evidence that I had so far collected and compare it with my previous experience. The result showed me that their conduct was nothing to be surprised at, and I recalled to memory numerous cases that I had known of men who, being placed in similar positions, had, instead of being drawn together by a common bond of suffering, simply hated each other, and wouldn't speak to one another sometimes for months on end, and although occupying the same hut, each would have his own entrance. I recalled a case I met with in Southern Nigeria of finding the body of a two-day-old suicide with the brains on the pillow, and the man in the next room, separated only by a wall, unaware of his death or the manner thereof.

"You see, sir, I told you they wouldn't find him." It was Penn again.

Phœnix swore out loud, and took a pace towards Penn, but the voice rasped on.

"Yes, and I told him, too, that we weren't speaking to Mr Oxley."

"Never mind," I interposed, "never mind. The first thing to do is to find him. I'll call out my party, and if he is really lost, I expect we'll find him all right."

Phœnix turned to a cupboard and began to take out cartridges and count them.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose you'll have to call out your party."

Ford, by my side, startled me with—

"You can't keep it from him, Phœnix," he cried. A strained look came into the faces of all present.

"Is he dead?" I asked, risking the worst.

"No! no! sir," Ford hastily rejoined.

"Shut up, will you?" yelled Phœnix.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute; I am not here to pry into your family squabbles," I said, "and I don't want your confidences unless you offer them. But tell me what had best be done."

"Search for a lunatic," cut in the irascible Penn, as calm and cold as ever.

I am not sure that I should have taken note of this disturbance if it had not produced such an unexpected silence. I was looking at Phœnix, and his lips widened into a long thin line, while his eyelids closed down till they looked

like mere slits, and then opened with dismay until I saw plain horror in them. He was looking beyond me, and following his line of gaze I saw Ford with a similar expression on his face. The silence lasted for several seconds, and then Phœnix said—

"Let us start right away. The ground to be covered is from here to the edge of the foothills on the east and north. He can't possibly have gone further, as we heard his cry la——"

"So that was his, was it?" I asked, closely scanning his face and immediately forming my opinion as to what distance he was likely to cover in the interim as the recollection of that cry upon the night of our anchoring came back to me.

"Shall we spread out, sir?" inquired Ford as we gained the open.

"No," I replied, "not just yet, as the ground about here is flat and we can see just as much together as we could spread out; time enough when we reach the hills."

"Very well," said Phœnix. "I'll bring some 'boys' with some provisions on after you."

Penn chuckled and looked pointedly at Phœnix; for a moment Phœnix's hand dropped towards his belt, but as the laugh died off Penn's face almost instantly, Phœnix's hand dropped as quickly.

"Come along," I said, trying to avert a quarrel, and within five minutes we were plodding along towards the north-east.

For a while we walked on in silence; they seemed reluctant to begin explanations, and then, as Phœnix caught us up, I inquired of him—

"How does Oxley get his grub?"

Penn and Ford looked at Phœnix. He walked on a few paces before answering, and then said—

"How do I know?"

He spoke very defiantly, and I was just in time to catch back an indignant inquiry as to whether, as chief of his party, he shouldn't have made it his business to find out. He must have realised my impulse, for he hastened to explain: "He comes for food though—that is, we think he does."

"Why, we know he does," broke in Ford. "The case of flour and bacon is empty."

Phœnix roared at him.

"Tell the story yourself, you fool, if you want to, I'll have nothing more to say. You have wanted to tell it all along, now say on!"

Phœnix moved still further ahead.

Ford's mouth straightened out into a line. Penn grinned, and Tearle looked angrily at Penn.

I was afraid there was going to be trouble and intervened.

"Never mind, boys," I said. "Let's do our best now; it will be all the same at the end of all things."

Ford looked positively pleased and turned to me eagerly.

"That's exactly what we thought!" he exclaimed—"or rather," he stammered on, "we

didn't think much about it. We knew, of course, that—that something was wrong, but it—it didn't seem so bad, until you came. We were living our own lives up here, and this was just one of the conditions—I can't seem to explain it." He paused and looked anxiously at me, and then burst out again—

"You know how it is, sir! You have been here!"

"Yes, I think I know," I said. "Let me put it straight. There is something queer about Oxley, and it just goes with the rest of the weirdness here—the weirdness of this part of the world, I mean; I know it, I think, perhaps as well as you,—and so, of course, you didn't realise Oxley's oddities."

He looked a little disappointed.

"Yes," he admitted. "That is part of it. He is queer. You heard what Penn said. None of us ever said that before. We suspected—at least I did, I know now—that he was not quite right, but he kept away from us, and we had our own interests, and didn't speak of it—didn't want to speak of it. Perhaps," he confessed, "we were afraid to speak of it. At any rate it didn't seem so bad until yesterday, when you came. You see, sir, you came from home, and all of a sudden we thought of what they would think of this business."

"H'm!" I reflected. "Yes, I see. The standards of civilisation cropped up anew, with our arrival."

Phœnix turned about suddenly.

"We don't know that he's insane!" he exclaimed.

"Well, then," said I, "what makes you think that he is?"

Phœnix turned abruptly and walked rapidly on. In a minute Ford hinted timidly—

"Well, sir, you must have heard him yesterday."

"Yes," I agreed; "I heard. I am not likely to forget it."

"Neither are we," answered Ford quickly. "That has been going on for a long time."

Ford looked toward Penn, apparently for help, but Penn had nothing ready, so the lad took the burden upon himself.

"Well, I don't quite know," he hesitated. "You see," he went on, "he took his provisions himself from the general stores—the boxes, you know, outside the headquarters—and carried them to his hut."

"I suppose you mean," I suggested, in some bewilderment, "that he watched for your absence to get his food unmolested."

Ford turned with an appeal to Phœnix.

"That's what you think, isn't it, old man?" but receiving no reply except a grunt, he repeated: "That's what Phœnix says. But I think you ought to know, sir, that it seems to me not like Oxley—and in fact he has only been doing it for a short time, a couple of months. Penn says—didn't you, Penn?—that he used to march up

and take what he wanted whether we were there or not."

"That's what he did," grinned Penn. "I should jolly well think so. He wasn't minding us in those days."

Phœnix faced about again.

"Not that we ever tried to prevent him," he threw off. "He was always welcome to food."

I could not help repeating that; yes, I supposed that he had been welcome to food. They did not seem to see any point in this, at least they did not acknowledge it directly; though after a moment Penn suddenly came again to the foreground with the remark that he had seen traps that Oxley must have built for leopards.

"Yes, I have seen them too," added Ford. "I hoped —that is, I dare say that he hated to come to us for grub as much——"

He broke off, and I filled out his sentence—

"As much as you hated to have him."

"No, not quite that," Ford hastened to differentiate.

"As much as we hated to see him."

"Oh!" I commented. "Did you hate him as much as that?"

"Well, yes! you see his face became awful," continued Ford; "it was demoniacal over the least thing, and as he was always in the wrong it was maddening to have to take orders from him, especially as we knew very well that they would be cancelled the next minute, and then reissued and cancelled again in almost the same breath; his mind was chaos, and like all those sort of people he was always screaming at people not to jump to conclusions, and then in the same breath he would make the most absurd statements himself. He couldn't remember a thing for five minutes, and things that happened overnight and would require to be dealt with the following morning would, when morning came, be completely forgotten, or only remembered as a garbled version of the actual facts, and he would proceed to deal with the matter on what he remembered of the facts. The result was that everything had to be done twice—further, he couldn't make notes; upon the rare occasions he jotted anything down, when he came to read it he couldn't remember what it was about. We couldn't get away from him even after working hours; it was quite usual to be sitting in your gidda perhaps at nine or even ten at night, when suddenly you would hear his gallop; as he approached your house he would burst in completely out of breath with the importance of some trifling inquiry, about a matter upon which you had already informed him in writing during the day, and in addition mentioned the subject to him several times as well; it wasn't that we didn't know our duty to him as

manager, but that he didn't know his. He used to run instead of walk at all hours during the day—his run was more like the gallop of a horse than a human; sometimes he would go about in the heat of the midday sun without his helmet, his hands with the fingers outspread over his head to keep off the sun."

"Where was Mr Phœnix during all this?"

"He was often away at other properties, or else kept to his gidda most of the day. Oxley wasn't a very pleasant companion," finished Ford. "And I believe that he liked us just about as much as we liked him. You know what he did to Hughes?"

"Yes," I acknowledged, "I guessed that there had been a fight. So he's ugly, too, is he?"

Ford spoke impetuously.

"He has been ugly from the very first. You know how big he is? Well, he thought that because he could pull two of us round in a boat, and could walk away with eighty pounds, that he had the right to bully us. He was always trying to get us to do athletic stunts, and then he laughed at us when he beat us. And he used to show us a trunkful of medals that he had won at Oxford. When at dinner he wore a lot of them—his coat was covered all up with them. It was beastly. It seems foolish, I know, sir, to care about things like that——"

"If he carried that kind of thing into the rains," I assisted, "I can easily see how it might get on your nerves."

"That's it, sir!" said Ford, so earnestly that he had the effect of pleading a cause. "It was the rains and the thunder, and in August we couldn't go out at all, and we were all cooped up together in that hut, and every one knew just what every one else was going to say next, and I thought the damn thing would never end."

"And you all hated each other?" I put in.

"There were some minor quarrels," admitted Ford solemnly.

"But nothing like the big one?" I suggested.

"Oh, no," expostulated Ford. "Nothing like that. It's queer," he added, "but I think that did the rest of us good. You see it gave us something to talk about. We had a common sympathy——" He looked to inquire whether I understood.

"I see," said I. "You became brethren in your common hatred of Oxley."

"That's it exactly," rejoined Ford. "We were better from that minute. We used to sit around the table after dinner when the chief had gone to his room and Oxley had shut himself up in his bunk, and talk the matter over, and afterwards turn in quite friendly."

Just so, I mused. "I can understand. Did the chief ever talk it over?"

"No; but he had suspended

Oxley from active work, and I don't think he noticed him much after that. You can't tell what the chief thinks. He keeps altogether to himself."

"I suppose the smash came some time in September?" I asked.

"Yes," said Ford, "in the middle of the month. How did you know?"

"Penn told me that he had a bad dose of fever just then, and I concluded that it wouldn't be long before he gave way entirely. Is that true?"

I caught a queer satirical expression on Penn's face. Ford's face fell into dismal lines and he only gave a nod. We plodded silently along the dull stretch of khaki-coloured ground bounded by the low range of black hills, beyond which we hoped to find Oxley; except ourselves not a living thing stirred.

"Did you ever think," I asked, "that it must have been maddening for Oxley?"

"He didn't care much about our company. You see, sir, our not speaking to him wasn't all that was wrong. We just didn't care to have anything to do with him, and at table we weren't careful to pay attention to what he said. You see, sir, he was always reaching up for epigrams in his speech, and you couldn't fail to notice the way he used to listen to his own voice. At last no one would answer him, and then he ceased speaking altogether, and began to take his meals by himself; he used to take his share of things before we had been helped and take them to his room."

"Before or after you were seated?" I inquired.

"Oh, he didn't mind; you see, those college chaps think that their superior education is such that, as Hughes says, they think they can afford to be rude to people from lower schools than themselves, and that it won't be attributed to anything but a superior indifference to ordinary conventions."

"But I did not think you carried that thing to here," I replied.

"We don't, sir; but when he showed obvious contempt for us and everything but himself, it reminded us of them. You see," he added anxiously, "we didn't mean to treat him badly, but just didn't want to have anything to do with him."

"Just so," said I; "do you know what he did with himself?"

"He spent most of his time in his room — I don't know what he did there. We only had two packs of playing-cards, and one night he came, without a word, and carried one away, and we never saw it again."

This seemed irrelevant to me, but evidently formed part of the general grievance, for Penn took it up.

"He kept it in his room, and used to sit up late at night playing 'Patience.' I got up at two o'clock one night,

and, seeing his light burning, went and looked in, and he was talking to himself and playing cards."

"Did you catch what he said?"

"No, as he always spoke in French when excited, or on any occasion like that."

"You see he was educated in France," broke in Ford.

"Had he any pets?" was my next question.

Penn answered me in an odd dry manner, as if he were uttering an effective bit of irony.

"Yes—my dog."

"That's true," faltered Ford. "It only began to go to him when no one else would."

"You know what some of these dogs are," said Penn. "Some of them you can get on with, and some you can't. That one stuck to Oxley because he over-fed it, and for no other reason."

"Where is it now?" I asked.

Neither of them seemed inclined to answer, and I could see, by a sudden shadow that crossed Ford's face, that some terrible realisation had just come home to him.

"It's dead," faltered Ford.

Thinking I saw complete daylight at last, I inquired, "Had Oxley anything to do with its death?"

Ford faltered again, and then answered in a non-committal sort of way, "Yes—indirectly."

"A man doesn't like his dog to forsake him," blurted out Penn.

I could see that Ford was relieved at Penn's interruption, and looked as if he wished to shift the rest of the story on to Penn's shoulders, but Penn suddenly dried up, and Ford had perforce to continue the story.

"You see it was like this, sir. One day during a short cessation in the rain, we decided to go for a run, and Penn whistled his dog; it answered the whistle all right and left Oxley's side. I was looking on at the time, and I thought that Oxley was going to break down; instead of that he gave a counter-whistle, and the dog forsook Penn and ran back to him, and Penn didn't like it—can't you tell?" he beseeched, turning imploringly to Penn.

"And I damn well shot it dead there and then," blurted out Penn in no way affected by Ford's exhibition of kindly feeling.

"Then a bird came and lit on the dog's body and chirped 'Peep, peep,'" said Ford.

"Well, what of that?" I asked, wondering what that had to do with it.

"Penn fired a stone at it!"

"I thought it said 'pip, pip,'" grinned Penn.

I thought that I had never listened to a more brutal sentence in all my life, and I told him plainly that it was himself he should have shot, at which he only laughed.

I rather thought that Ford was going to break down—he was green to the lips, but he went on bravely—

"I didn't think of it at the time—only afterwards; at the

time we were too busy getting an outing, and we were all angry with Oxley and thinking too much about our own affairs to bother about his feelings."

"What happened after they had gone?" I asked Ford.

"Oh! Oxley got the dog's body and buried it. It was about this time that he took a particularly bad dose of fever——"

"And was unapproachable," commented Penn aside.

"I used to go and see him," contradicted Ford.

"Aye—only you," sneered Penn.

"What about the doctor?" I asked in astonishment.

"Oh! the doctor—oh yes, I forgot him," replied Ford. "The doctor came to see him once, but as Oxley was nearly delirious at the time and didn't like the doctor, it only made him worse."

"Couldn't he exercise some influence over his patient?" I inquired in astonishment.

"Well, you see, sir, the doctor was always suffering from intermittent fever and wasn't much use during his attacks."

"I see," I replied comprehendingly, "and so you became nurse and doctor all in one."

"I don't mean it as a reflection on the doctor's skill," he continued in a compromising tone, "but that is just as it happened."

I encouraged him to continue.

"Well," he continued, a little more cheerfully, "I may as well tell all. He went from bad to worse until I thought he was going to die, but through it all the doctor daren't go near him, and as none of the others would, I had to do all the work. Well, sir, one day I was so utterly fagged out that I fell asleep and lay like a log far into the next morning, and when I awoke I found Oxley crying out and moaning. I was too dazed at first to listen intelligently, but as my senses came back I heard the fellows cursing and asking him to shut up his oh! oh-ing! As I lay listening it suddenly occurred to me that Oxley always spoke in French when upset or excited, and that what the other fellows mistook for a mere moan in English was really the cry of "eau-eau." The realisation was awful. For the first time I was glad that our alarum clock had stopped with the rust and that I couldn't see how long he had been without water; since then I have worked it out and it must have been at least twenty-two hours, sir."

I fairly gasped, but noticing his agony of mind, I hastened to console him.

"Well, sir," he continued, "after this, strange to say, he began to mend—it seemed as if he was fated to live, and that now that the fever had done its worst, short of killing him, it had nothing left to do but depart."

"Did he display any gratitude towards you?"

"No, sir, he never spoke to

me except when he had to ask for anything—he suddenly became very resigned."

"What happened after this?" I asked.

"He went away as soon as the small rains set in and we didn't see him for nearly a week. Then Phœnix met him fooling about the stores. He says that Oxley walked up to him aggressively, but Phœnix turned and walked away."

"How did you get on with the rest of the men?" I asked.

"Oh! I—" he laughed. "I can get on with any one."

"Didn't Phœnix leave any rations on purpose so that he could get them?" I asked.

"Oh yes," replied Ford, "he did the conventional thing—he left out grub and all eating requisites."

"Any ammunition?" I inquired.

"Oh yes, we left him ammunition all right, but he used to pass it over and open fresh cases."

"Did he eat his food raw or cooked?" I asked.

"Give it up," he replied; "we left him cooking utensils, which we presume he carted away as they disappeared entirely. He built a hut a few miles outside a Pagan village to the north, but——"

"Then let us go there at once, instead of wasting time about here," I suggested.

"That's just what I was going to tell you," he continued. "Oxley never stays in the one hut more than a few days; he's always changing his abode and building himself new huts."

"Do the natives help him?" I inquired.

"They wanted to do so at first, but he drove them away; and now they think he is a madman, and openly treat him as such, and this only makes him worse. So now they leave building materials ready to his hand, but he won't use them."

"That was his boy you met coming in," added Penn—"the one who deserted. I met him once," continued Penn, "and I said, How do?"

Ford's worn face lighted up.

"Did you, Penn?" he burst out. "Why didn't you tell us."

"You know as well as I do," grinned Penn, "no one seemed to be talking to him just then."

Ford lifted his hands with a gesture which I thought theatrical, and said, "Damn the whole business!"

I wondered that he didn't detect the note of irony that was in Penn's voice, and conclude—as I had done—that Penn's way of saluting Oxley was not calculated to induce that unfortunate to come to a reconciliation.

His outburst startled us all, and we marched on embarrassed for a moment.

"Did he answer you?" I asked of Penn.

"No," said Penn; "he simply stood and stared at me, and his eyes opened till they were complete circles."

"Did you notice his eyes in particular?" I asked.

"Yes," said Penn; "they were round and funny."

"Round and funny?" I queried. "Anything else?"

"Yes, with small discs in the centre like pieces of bright steel."

"Oh, hell!" shouted Ford, "why didn't you do something? If I'd seen him I'd have done something."

"You might have seen him yourself if you had taken the trouble," replied Penn imperturbably. "He used to come peering round the place and whistle, as if calling a dog."

"Oh yes, I remember something like that now; but I suppose I must have forgotten," said Ford in a dropping voice.

Penn's airy manner became insupportable, and I refrained from questioning him further; besides, there were plenty of things to think about.

Of course Oxley had been overbearing. It was the natural expression of the pride that went with his strength and medals. One thing was certain, he should never have been chosen for a West African mining camp. I had an amount of fascination in erecting for myself the spectacle of a man like Oxley—university bred—with what all men outside a Government office would call a "lawdy-daw" manner. The inability of the men, owing to a certain amount of prejudice against the class, to associate an affectation of voice with the manly feats of which he was no doubt capable, all the little conventional observances which came quite natural, and which were no doubt performed unconsciously by him—those and a host of small things all combined went to make up one great grievance; then his rank folly in openly displaying his "superior education," and that too during the rainy season in the tropics. In all fairness I couldn't blame the members of the party for hating Oxley, nor even for carrying into the light of day the vindictiveness that had flourished in the dark, and the next moment I was blaming them for treating a comrade in such a manner. Of course I knew well how insignificant life and death were in a country where the vicissitudes of life and death are superabundant, and where you sit down with a man to dinner to-night and go to his funeral the next morning without any feelings of undue amazement; and yet at least they might have taken the pains to find out whether they had driven a comrade crazy or not.

We were now within fifty yards of a small hut, which Ford explained had been built by Oxley. Already Phœnix, who was on ahead, had entered. Just as we approached the entrance Ford stumbled—it was a slight stumble—but instantly Penn had him by the elbow. He jerked him upright, and supported him with an arm around his waist until

Ford shook it away and started on. As we entered Penn loitered behind with an arm in readiness. His anxiety was real; evidently he had an affection for the boy in his own rough way. He hustled him into the house very much as an elephant hustles along her young. There was a low mud shelf along one side, and he made Ford sit down and fanned him with a wad of grass which he caught up from the floor.

It was not a superfluous attention, for the air inside was revolting. Everything was wet, and the muddy ground was strewn with empty cans: I caught the labels of chicken, beef, fish, ham, tongue, potatoes, tomatoes, and all the preserved foods that are to be found in a tropical store; what remained of a rusty double-barrelled shot-gun lay among them. The stock was broken and the barrel was bent and twisted; in one corner lay a pile of decomposing pelts and furs. Phœnix stood in the middle of the litter searching about him. Presently he stooped and picked up something which lay among the labels. I was watching his face, and noticed a quiver about the lips. Ford, who was evidently watching it also, arose from his seat and snatched it from him. No sooner had Ford looked at it than he gave a cry and dropped it as if it had stung him. I picked it up instantly, and was surprised to see that it was a hand-painted photograph of a very pretty girl, with a pair of trustful blue eyes, and her hair in two plaits over her shoulders, making three-corner her forehead: across the shoulder of the photograph was the inscription, "With love to Ned," and underneath it, apparently in Oxley's handwriting, was a rough drawing of a dog with the words "Old Chap" underneath that again.

As Penn was paying Ford all the attention he required, I pocketed the photograph and gave the place a closer survey. On a raised earthen mound stood a uniform case of black-japanned tin, with the letters E. O. in white on its lid, and underneath that a large red label bearing the words:

Elder, Dempster, & Co.,
First-class state room.
NOT WANTED during voyage.

The lid of the box had been prised open, as was evidenced by the look. Raising the lid, I was met by a stifling odour—a heap of decayed pelts met my gaze. Calling one of the "boys" who had carried our grub, I got him to clear the box out. While he was doing it I continued my search, and was rewarded by finding a couple of sealed envelopes; without intending to be unduly officious, I considered myself entitled to inspect their contents, and I was glad that I did so, for inside each was a half-sheet of notepaper, bearing the same rough drawing of a dog as appeared on the photograph, and underneath were the words "Old Chap."

I had too much sympathy with Ford to let him see my discovery, but I wondered what effect it would have on Penn, so I called him to me and bade him read what was on the notepaper. I may be misjudging the man—I don't know. A harsh laugh burst from him, which would have drawn a reply from my fist, but that I noticed in time a twitching round the corners of the mouth and concluded that the laugh was only forced to hide finer feelings, which the man evidently considered it a weakness to admit.

Presently I was aware that Phœnix was at my side, standing with his hands behind his back.

"I don't see any reading matter," I said.

"Oxley never did care for reading; in fact it was one of the things that made him so unbearable."

"How was that?"

"He used to show by his manner that although we were always reading and he wasn't, that he knew more than any of us."

"Surely you could afford not to notice such conduct?" I asked.

"I could," replied Phœnix, "but the others couldn't."

"Was he what you would call a gentleman?" was my next inquiry.

"We-ll, he was," hesitated Phœnix; "that is, as far as schooling went, but he couldn't conceal the fact that he thought us beneath him."

"I don't wish to be too personal," I said, "but are you a university man?"

"No," answered Phœnix, with a challenging look in his eye; "I don't see what matter it makes what school a fellow went to—it's what he learnt there."

"True," I agreed; "I know there are as good educations to be had outside as inside these places."

Phœnix abruptly left my side as if to show himself out of sympathy with my methods of investigation, and went to the slab where Ford was sitting with his face buried in his hands; he took no notice of Ford, but examined the slab.

"He slept on this," he announced.

I do not know why this statement seemed so impressive, unless it was because Phœnix had spoken in his ordinary pitch and his voice had sounded more than usually harsh. The slab was covered with a few skins and pelts, and beneath a bundle forming a pillow was a pack of playing-cards and several small flat stones. Phœnix swore impatiently and knocked one of the flat stones to the ground; in its fall it turned over; almost instantly he stooped, picked it up and examined it. His scrutiny lasted so long that we gathered behind him; it was a piece of slate about half the size of a playing-card, and upon it had been roughly scratched — probably with a jack-knife—the same drawing and superscription which was

upon the photo and half-sheets of notepaper. Ford uttered a queer cry and flung the other stones from the bed; some of them upon turning over displayed the same drawing, and one bore the name "Jenny" above the drawing of a heart.

They gazed blankly at one another. Phœnix's face lost its rigidity, his jaw dropped, and his eyes were glassed over. Ford caught the horror, sank back upon the bed, and again covered his face with his hands.

I looked to Penn, expecting him to rush to Ford's aid, but was surprised to find him standing in the doorway with one of the stones in his hand and an expression of blank dismay upon his features. I remember now that I couldn't see his eyes until he raised his head, and as he did so the light from the open way shone full upon them. For an instant they seemed rather grim with obvious emotion; I had the sensation of having seen similar before, and as I wondered where, his own description came back to me in answer to my late inquiry about Oxley's eyes.

"Round and funny, with small discs in the centre like pieces of bright metal."

It was with feelings akin to horror that I realised this, but collecting my senses quickly, I called to both him and Ford to come into the fresh air.

I pulled Ford to his feet and into the open. Beyond the door he jerked his arm free of mine and turned on me fiercely.

"It's not our fault, it's not our fault. It was the monotony and rain," he raged.

"Aye! rain — rain — you ought to know the rain," echoed a thin flat voice at my side like the bark of a toy spaniel. I turned, for I didn't recognise the tones, and was surprised to see that it was Penn—but what a different Penn from the one of a few moments ago—why, the man's face had shrunk to half its size.

I seized him by the shoulders and shook him up, then calling Phœnix to hold him down I got out my flask. He gulped down the raw spirit without a cough, until I had to stop him.

I then forced some on Ford, pressing what was left on to Phœnix.

"Now, we'll have chop," I said, "and come back to common-sense."

When "chop" was over, I took Phœnix aside.

"Come," I said, "you are no boy, and I want you to tell me the best way to get Oxley back—I don't suppose you think he is d-ead——"

I had to hesitate, but Phœnix reassured me with a meditative shake of his head.

"Well, then," I said, "you must have some plan for getting him back—tell me about it."

"I hardly know how to answer," he replied. "The arrangements seem to be taken out of my hands."

"Out of your hands?" I inquired. "Who by?"

He made no reply to my questions, but occupied himself with fumbling with his bootlace.

I swallowed my disgust. "Perhaps you would be good enough to tell me who by, and what are your plans for getting Oxley back?"

"The first part has failed, as we expected to find him here. It was Ford's opinion, and I may say mine, that he was inside. I want to make it clear to you at once," he proceeded aggressively, "that I was for going out and bringing Oxley in—by force if necessary. But Ford and Hughes and Tearle asked me to wait and give you a chance. Ford thought that, as a stranger, you might do something with Oxley," he flung off after a pause.

"Perhaps I might do something," I agreed. "Have you any idea where Oxley is?"

"Ford thinks he knows. I've heard his idea, and I must say I think it worth looking into."

"Wait a moment," I said. "Is it more horror?"

"That depends upon what you call horror," he responded with a shrug of his shoulders. "I suppose you could find horror in it if you had a bit of an imagination."

His rancour was so evident that I lost patience, and determined to get an answer from one of the others.

"Very well," I said, "I've only one more question to ask you—Do you think that Oxley is—er—well—quite responsible?"

"Crazy?" cried Phœnix. "How can I tell? How can I tell? Damn the man," he breathed as he turned and walked away.

If he were insane, I thought, his treatment at the hands of his party had been enough to make most men a little queer, but in spite of this I could not bring myself to believe that the well-balanced mind of a man of his education could be so irretrievably unhinged in so short a time.

Whether Phœnix repented of his brusqueness to me or not I can't say, but he approached me and asked me to have the story from Ford himself.

"Very well," I said, "let our boys spread our chairs in the shade of the hut, and then I'll listen."

"Well, you see," said Ford, when we were seated, "Oxley was very fond of animals, in fact upon one occasion he told us he couldn't live without them."

"Dogs, you mean," I interrupted.

"No! no! not dogs only, but all animals—cats, birds, horses, cattle, and even sheep, and before he went ins—away," he corrected, "he would go into the next valley—the valley beyond Karama village, where the goats and sheep are. But Phœnix thinks they are only theories."

"Theories," I repeated. "No, very probably you're right."

"I think he is too," chimed in Hughes, who had hardly

spoken previous to this, "for Oxley used to love animals of all kinds, and used only to go there to look at the sheep and cattle."

"What sort of sheep are they?" I inquired.

"Oh! a mongrel kind, a cross between a Persian and a Cape sheep," answered Tearle, who was at one time in the employment of Hagenbeck's, and could therefore speak as an authority.

"Could nothing else have induced him to go there?" I inquired.

"Oh, we've only been there once or twice," continued Tearle with a shrug, "but I for one didn't like it. There's a sort of whispering-gallery there."

I must have looked my miscomprehension, for he added: "One of those places where you speak in a low tone and can be heard miles off."

"Who saw Oxley there?" I asked. "Did you?"

"Yes," said he, "we all did, and in that valley the echo is remarkable—in fact the doctor says that the sound travels right round the rocks to the east and clean round the depression we are now in, and can even be heard at the lagoon where you left your boat."

I started; so this was the solution of the sound which we had heard upon the night of our final anchorage.

"In that valley," he continued, "there are places where it comes back to you three or four times as clear as you hear me now. Only last month I was coming back from a trip, my road lay alongside the cliffs that shut in the valley, and I had to pass a projecting ledge of rock that juts out from the cliff; all of a sudden some one said 'Hello, old chap,' just at my ear. I jumped. At first I thought it was Ford—you know he has ways too, picked 'em up from Oxley, and always says 'Hello, old chap,' and bids you good morning and good night, and wants to shake hands with you when he comes back from a trip."

I looked at Ford to see what effect this candid summing up of himself had upon him.

He was looking straight ahead with a misty glimmer about his tired eyes, and I hoped he hadn't heard.

"I shouted back and got millions of echoes, and in the middle of them a whistle like what you call a dog with; I made up my mind to investigate, and climbed to the top; and there was Oxley down in the valley holding a young lamb in his arms and calling out 'Hello, old chap.' I thought it was me he was calling, so I climbed down the rock towards him. It was queer," he went on meditatively. "Sometimes I could hear all kinds of noises, and sometimes as I dislodged a stone I could hear it rattling like the fire of an army, and all through came the sound, as if just in my ear, 'Hello, old chap.'

"I had to watch my way going down, for the descent is slippery, and I didn't get a decent chance to look at Oxley

until I got on the flat. I was pretty near him then, but his back was turned, and it suddenly dawned upon me that he wouldn't say it so often if it was to me.

"Do you know what he was doing?" he demanded, and immediately answered himself: "He was talking into the lamb's ear while the Filani boy lay amongst the sheep nearly paralysed with fright,—now what do you think of that?" he burst out, apparently unable to restrain his eagerness for verbal appreciation.

His story gave terrible meaning to the fragments of narrative that had been scattered to me; it had, as it were, reflected back into the gloom and killing monotony of the rainy season a gleam of light which revealed the mortal agony of that great mass of a man in his maddening isolation, while his pride, the essence of himself, was breaking down.

Against the loneliness Oxley must have been helpless—I shuddered to think of myself alone in that desolation of desolations,—I asked myself over and over again why he didn't go and make friends with one of the native tribes, but could find no answer except the conclusion that his mind had already become unhinged before he finally parted with his white companions. How he must have suffered! I could not measure it. Then I thought of his pride in his great body and "superior" education, and his useless opposition to the inexorable aloofness of nature. Why had he not been driven—absolutely driven—by his isolation to seek them out and ask one word of comfort,—to force from them companionship by his "superior intellect"—by the intellect that needed not the companionship of books.

I turned upon Tearle.

"Well," I almost screamed, "what did *you* do?"

"Nothing," replied Tearle in the most natural voice imaginable. "I simply walked away without his seeing me."

"Oh! hell," moaned Ford.

"How dared you do it?" I shouted. "You should have gone to him or have reported the affair to your chief. Why didn't you do it?"

"The chief didn't want to hear about him," he protested confusedly. "The chief had suspended him—even Ford didn't go."

"Is that an excuse for you?" I roared. Then I saw the uselessness of casting blame and I stopped.

"I know something now that I didn't know until you came along asking questions about him."

"You ought at least to have spoken to the chief."

"Good lord," he shouted, "do you think I'm a boy like Ford?"

In spite of my efforts to think clearly, a confused medley of ideas came crowding to my brain. Chief amongst them was the question, "At what period in his downfall had he become conscious of the need of other men and come to peer over rocks at them, and seek

comfort in hearing 'Hello, old chap,' from echoes, and applying it to all animals with which he came in contact?"

It was now nearly two o'clock, and time for us to be getting under way again. An hour's walk brought us to the valley in which Tearle had seen Oxley on that memorable day.

"This is where he stood!" exclaimed Tearle. We were in the depression of a natural amphitheatre; around us on all sides were great towering black cliffs, with broad water-worn furrows glistening like silver on their sides. Monkey Hill lay to the north, and Satu to the east. At the foot of Monkey Hill and on the eastern side ran the Quaya pass, and through it during the rains ran the Quaya stream, but now a mere trickle of water, running to the pool which formed an ideal cattle-trough.

We had almost reached the side of the water, and stood facing a pass through the rocks similar to the one by which we had entered. There was a thin line of quartz-stringer running along the other side of the pool for a hundred yards or more, which at last rose abruptly, a bright white note against the black circumference of the hollow, and melted into the other side of the ridge.

"Look!" called Phœnix, pointing to the eastern pass in the cliff, "there's something coming."

A mile or so away, straight ahead, moved two black figures, making their way around the base of the promontory. Against the immensity of the cliff they looked ridiculously insignificant. I had the sense of watching flies sidling along the wainscoting of a large room.

Phœnix brought a pair of glasses to bear upon them, and then handed them to me.

"Sheep," I said, as I returned them.

"Rather early in the day for them to be folded," commented Phœnix. "I suppose the remainder are coming after."

"No, only a lone couple coming down to drink," answered Tearle. "It will be some hours yet before the flock arrives."

"Are they likely to run away if they see us?" I inquired of Tearle.

"They've seen us already," he replied, "but let's get under cover and wait."

We spent the next two hours waiting in expectation of finding Ford's theory realised — viz., that Oxley would come back to the valley before nightfall with the sheep.

It was yet an hour to sundown when more black spots began to slide round the wainscoting of the cliffs. A light eastern wind had got up and faintly wafted to our ears a low swelling whisper with a long-drawn note of pain in it.

"Here they come," said Tearle.

And a few moments later the whole cliff-side was alive with writhing, moving, springing objects which looked coal-black in the mountain shade.

For fully half an hour the stream passed through with a uniformity about their height which was broken only now and again by a larger object which proved to be a humpbacked cow.

The sun was just slipping over the top of the eastern cliff when a longer object moved into view, which with the aid of the glasses I made out to be the Filani herd.

Tearle, who was crouched down beside me, suddenly uttered an exclamation, and seizing me by the arm pointed excitedly to the rear of the sheep and cried: "Good God, whatever's that?"

For a fraction of a second a larger object than anything else around caught my eye, but just as quickly seemed to be swallowed up in the dust and movement of the flock.

Phœnix was kneeling with his right hand shading his eyes.

"Only one sheep on the other's back," was his reply.

I looked at Tearle, but could see for some reason unknown to me that he wasn't convinced.

"Don't like the look of it," he soliloquised.

"Great God!" I cried, "surely you don't mean to suggest that——"

Just then the sun half slipped below the cliff wall and showed up each face ashen grey in the shadow.

"Come," said Tearle, "let's make a detour and get to the shepherd."

Scrambling to our feet, we fell in as if by mutual consent behind Tearle. The going was rough and the noise of our progress carried to the sheep, whose leaders instantly converged on their followers, quickly bringing the whole flock into a crescent-shaped formation, and exposing the whole length of their line to our searching gaze.

In ten minutes we had reached the front of their line. Though nobody had spoken, we each knew what was in the other's mind.

Suddenly I became conscious of a pain in my left arm, and was barely conscious of the ownership of Tearle's voice as he croaked hoarsely in my ear—

"Look, sir, look! Look! Oh, my God, look!"

In a perfect agony of dread, in which my one thought seemed to be that I was now really acting a piece which had previously been rehearsed many times in the past, I gazed fearfully at the place indicated by Tearle's shaking hand; for a flash of a second I caught a view of something which I dreaded to gaze at, and as quickly lost it as the surging animals moved.

"Look! look!" again cried Tearle, tightening his grip.

Another break in the line of sheep brought the same dread object into view, but still well into the general mass. I remember longing for them to stay still, if only for a moment, to enable my tired

eyes to pick out the strange object in their midst.

A bark at length, more animal-like than human, broke in on me, and through the everlasting murmur of the sheep I caught the words, "Oh—Christ—it's a man!"

The next instant Ford staggered by and threw himself on the strange object crawling on the ground. I was by his side in an instant, and between us we lifted the mass to its feet — it was hardly human,—a great mat of hair straggled over the head, completely hiding the features; the upper part of the body was completely naked and scorched the colour of the brown earth; over all lay a regular coating of goat's hair, tangled, matted, and filthy; the eyes weren't discernible through the matted locks. Great pads of flesh and cloth hung from the knees, which were worn nearly flat through crawling over the rough ground. A gaunt terrible figure, the beard immeasurably long. His clothes were ripped and torn by the sharp rocks and thorns, the boots were shreds of leather, bloody to the ankles, with the torn feet protruding through their rents.

Ford, raising his hands, tossed aside the ragged mane.

"Oxley! Oxley!" he shouted, rolling his weary head from side to side. "Oxley! Oxley! old chap, answer me!"

The great sunken eyes opened with a look in them which I'll see to my dying day; then an opening appeared more than half-way down the face and a great dry sound of "Ba-a-ah, Ba-a-ah" issued from the parched lips.

Ford staggered away with his hands to either side of his head, and the great figure, released from the support of his arms, dropped to its knees with a motion that spoke of long custom.

Without awaiting the given signal, but obeying the promptings of the impulse that snatched unerring at the opportunity, the men, Phœnix, Tearle, Ford, Hughes, and myself, rushed to pick him up; as we did so I was conscious that Penn joined us at the last moment, and I was also conscious that the action was more mechanical than voluntary on his part. I was on the top of Oxley with my hands upon his shoulders almost before I knew it, and the next moment I was sent reeling away as he rose under me, and with a suddenness and swiftness that seemed almost incredible he began dealing out blows and kicks right and left, — like lightning it developed into what a spectator would have taken for a fight of six to one. Six men in full possession of their senses against one poor demented, half-starved, half-naked wretch ground down to the point of imbecility by the nerve-destroying, brain-racking loneliness of the African bush. We swarmed upon him from all sides, gripping at his legs, his arms, his head, clutching him—shaken free — then clutching again,

falling to the ground, rolling over, over, and over—now under, now above, now staggering forward, now back; one moment under the hooves of a humpbacked cow, the next falling across the broken back of a sheep. Still Oxley fought, through that scrambling staggering group, through that maze of twisting bodies, twining arms and straining legs, his face flaming, his eyes bloodshot, his hair matted with sweat. Now he was down, pinned under, two men across his legs, and then half-way up again, resting on one knee, then upright again with half of us hanging on his back. His strength was that of a madman; when his arms were held he fought like a bull with his head; a score of times it seemed as if we were about to secure him finally and irrevocably, and then he would free an arm and send the fist crashing into some one's face, and the group that had settled locked and rigid on its prey would break as he flung a man from him reeling and bloody, and he himself twisting, squirming, dodging, his great fists working like pistons, backed away dragging and carrying us all with him.

More than once he loosened almost every grip, and for an instant stood panting, rolling his eyes, his body now stark naked, bleeding, dripping with sweat, a horrible figure, nearly free.

At length Tearle and Hughes were sent flying across the back of a young sheep which got mixed up in the fray, a well-directed kick from Oxley's foot sent Phœnix staggering away, and the next instant Oxley was free and bounding across the ground with a lope more suggestive of some four-footed creature than a human being, with his horrible cry of "Ba-a-ah" ringing in our ears. Hardly waiting to draw breath, we started in pursuit. The echoes took up the mocking cry, and perhaps it was partly in defiance of them as well as partly with an unformulated design of doing something at once that I took up the cry of "Oxley! Oxley! Oxley! Oxley!"

I had grown somewhat accustomed to the idea of echoes, but I was by no means prepared for the extraordinary effect that my increase in volume of tone produced. It seemed to find in every nook and corner of the valley new and responsive surfaces; from every point my cry came back until the whole amphitheatre was calling for "Oxley! Oxley! Oxley! Oxley!" and even after the chorus of rocks had taken up the call, and were transmitting "'Slee! 'Slee! 'Slee! 'Slee!" to the uttermost parts of the range, in the midst of the tumult of sound, sudden rapid exclamations of his name rapped out, apparently from close at hand. On we stumbled, Oxley straight ahead, bounding up the hill like a mountain-sheep. Suddenly, before I could realise it, I saw Ford and Penn stop

suddenly, plainly startled by something I knew not of, then came a cry — piercing, resonant, "Ba-a-ah!" Ford was a few paces ahead of me, and bending forward in an attitude that denoted a tensity of attention. After the last murmur had died, he threw out his hands with a gesture of despair, and turned to me a face portentous with a new idea. In some way or other, without the medium of words, I realised his thought and thrilled the rocks with "Hello, old chap!" Before the refrain had come back to me twice, it was overwhelmed by a great roar, and filled the cliffs again in the midst of a chaos of noises to which Phœnix, who had now caught us up, added. "There he is. Great Father, he's going to jump," and immediately Oxley leaped into full view on the summit of an overhanging crag which jutted out a hundred feet above us. The last few rays of the sun fell full upon him, and against the grey background of the cliffs his skin stood out like marble, while his gestures were plainly visible as he flung his arms to and fro. It was only for a moment that he stood there. With one last cry of sheer animal rage he leaped toward the old Ningi Hills.

THE LURE OF SEA CLIFFS.

BY LEO WALMSLEY.

THE plaintive cry of a herring-gull flying seaward through the murk that almost hid the Tower of London Bridge from the roadway brought it all back. Gone were the fog and smoke, the nerve-smashing clatter of buses and heavy drays, the acrid fumes of burnt oil and gasolene. . . . I saw a deep blue bay flecked white by a fresh west wind—the red-roofed cottages of a fishing town half hid in a wooded cove, a yellow carpet of gorse spreading up to the moors, and the tall sea cliffs that stretch for many a mile to the north and south of my native place, with the low murmur of breaking surf at their foot.

These cliffs held always for me an irresistible fascination, but for reason that the narrow path that skirts their edge was scantily fenced, and because of falling blocks and the treacherous tide below, I was forbidden under the severest penalty to venture near them. This in ordinary circumstances was an irksome enough restraint—with my mind ever full of the romance of smugglers and treasure-trove, secret messages washed up from ships, and the like; but when, at the age of thirteen, I fell victim to the egg-collecting fever, it was more than flesh or blood could stand. With simple guile I would tell my mother I was going to the woods for flowers, and then at the outskirts of the town meet a bosom friend of mine named Tom, the son of a coast-guard, and by a devious route we would make our way to Ness Cliff, hiding at the approach of any human being, then walking rapidly along, until the only living things to be seen or heard were the herring-gulls, kittiwakes, and cormorants, driven by our approach from their nests, circling and screaming in great commotion above our heads.

Carefully we would climb down the narrow grassy slope that separates the path from the vertical face of the cliff, and then, peering over the edge, feast our eyes on the treasure below. Not a ledge without its cluster of at least half a dozen rude grass nests, with one, two, or three beautiful green, brown-speckled eggs in each—a sight to make any boy's heart beat faster. And we would lie there in the wind-bitten grass and heath, with the murmur of the sea and the screaming of the gulls in our ears, plotting and planning as to how we could loot these ledges and add fresh spoil to our collection.

Fortunately, the love of adventure that is mine was tempered even in those days by the saving grace of caution. A risk I would take, but not

a foolhardy one. I would gamble my life readily on my nerve and climbing abilities if my instinct was satisfied first that the proposition was a feasible one. A proposal my companion made, that he should lower me down to the first ledge by means of a rotten old piece of tow-rope he had found on the beach, did not meet with my approval for this very reason. I doubted not that he would bear my weight, for he was strong and heavy built, while I was light as a jockey; but I seriously questioned, in spite of his assurances to the contrary, the tensile strength of the rope. I remember we had a fight over the matter, but when we came to test the rope from a tree in the woods (whither we went for our suspicion-allaying flowers), and it broke under his weight at the first trial, resulting in a painful fall in a bunch of nettles, he saw that my fears were not entirely groundless.

One glorious afternoon in May (it was a Sunday, if I remember rightly, and our parents doubtless were happy in the thought that for once we were out of harm's way in the Sabbath-school) we had wandered much farther than usual. Ledge after ledge we had reconnoitred—climbing far down to some, and getting so near that had only our arms been longer the precious eggs would have been within reach—trying to lift the treasure from others by means of a stiff wire loop — climbing, scrambling, crawling among the rank grass and thorn, with little regard for our best Sunday clothing, and one single thought in our minds—how to get a herring-gull's or a kittiwake's egg for our collection, and thus be the envy of all the village boys. It was exasperating to be so near to our heart's desire at times and yet so very far; but we were lured on with the hope that somewhere, at any rate, there would be an accessible ledge.

We passed Castle Chambers, where, a year or two before, a boy named Baxter, in reaching for a nest, had missed his footing and fallen to the rocks, two hundred feet below. By a lucky chance he was not killed, but the sight of the place served slightly to slacken our enthusiasm, and we talked of turning home while there was still time to join those righteous and obedient children who, while we were tanning in the sunshine and breathing the good sea air, were stewing in an atmosphere of varnished pitch-pine and mildewed hymn-books.

Alas for good intentions! for suddenly I clapped eyes on a broad grassy ledge, hardly twenty feet down from the path, and bearing anything up to a dozen herring-gull nests. The cliff sloped but gradually towards it, and at first glance it looked delightfully possible. Closer examination proved, however, that the slope was not so gradual as we had imagined, that the last six feet was little less than vertical, and

that it consisted of very soft blue shale, greased by a series of miniature springs oozing from the cliff edge. A large herring-gull, with superb grace, swooped down within a dozen feet of where we stood measuring out our problem, and screamed a defiant protest into our very faces. The trickling water had turned the grassy area of the slope into bog, and Tom, who had on a brand-new pair of boots, fearing to add but another item to the long crime-sheet of the day, dare not leave the path. Therefore I descended alone, creeping slowly down, until at last I was hanging by a thick clump of grass of "Parnassus" at the edge of the short greasy shale cliff, and barely six feet above the ledge. I could see the eggs distinctly, almost count their very spots: one nest contained three young ones, little brown balls of fluff, and farther on was a chick very nearly fledged, crouching timidly against the cliff face. I saw also that half-way down the shale bank was another large tuft of "Parnassus," growing from a miniature watercourse. Would it bear my weight? If it would, I could reach the ledge with ease, and what was more important, climb back safely to my present position. The accident to Baxter suddenly flashed across my mind. The precipice that fell directly from the edge of the ledge was higher than Castle Chambers, the tide was full and the surf breaking at the very foot of the cliff. If the tuft gave way I should be killed for a certainty: was it worth while? A glance at the eggs, so tantalisingly near, answered my question, and without a second's hesitation I turned over on to my stomach and lowered myself gently down until my feet touched the clump of grass. It was soft and spongy, and the water oozed from it as I gradually increased the strain.

To bend my body down until my hands almost touched the ledge was a tricky matter with nothing at all to grip, save the slippery shale; but I carried out the operation safely, bent down on one knee, lowered the other leg, and sprang lightly on to the broad ledge.

"Tom! Tom!" I cried exultantly, "I'm here! I've done it, Tom!" There was no reply; then came a low distant whistle—a whistle we had long agreed upon to be a signal of approaching danger. What had happened? Was some one coming? Tom evidently was making himself scarce, for the whistle sounded a long way off. Crouching as near to the cliff face as I could, I waited. . . . No further signal came, however, and my stock of patience was quickly exhausted. On hands and knees (alas for my Sunday suit!) I crept to the first nest. How wildly my heart beat as I handled the eggs, still warm from the brooding gulls! What beauties they were, delicate green their ground-work, mottled and blotched with the

loveliest shades of brown and blue. Hardly two of them were alike, and I went from nest to nest picking out the best specimens for our collection. More than two I could not possibly carry if my hands were to remain free for climbing. The chicks were wonderfully fascinating. How I should have loved to have taken one with me for a pet, but already I was overladen. . . . It was time to be getting back too. Plucking a handful of grass, I carefully wrapped up my precious eggs, transferred them to my jacket pocket, and started to creep back. Hardly had I turned, however, than there came a noise of loosening earth, and I saw the very tuft of grass and soil that had been my "stepping-stone" slide down the shale and fall with a sodden thud on the ledge. . . . *I was trapped as neatly as a stoat in a gin.*

"Tom, Tom," I screamed hysterically, but there was no answer save the mocking echo of my own voice, half-drowned by the clamouring of the gulls. For a minute or two I lay flat on the ledge, stunned by the awfulness of my predicament. Less than four feet away was the edge of the precipice falling a sheer three hundred feet to the wicked wave-washed rocks. Barring my way to the path and safety rose the black slimy wall of shale six feet in height, without as much as a finger-hold now that the tuft of grass had fallen. At the top of it I could see the firmer grassy sod, more tantalising now than ever the eggs had been. I thought of the Sabbath-school, and my pity for those pent-up children was changed to the bitterest envy. What would I have given to hear the mournful sound of the American organ, the voice of the superintendent giving out the hymn, to breathe through my nostrils the hated smell of the varnished pews and the mustiness that is invariably associated in my mind with the house that men call God's?

Slowly, however, my nerve returned. I rose to my knees and began to weigh up the possibilities of escape. Perhaps I could collect sufficient earth and shale to make a step from which I might reach the sod. I set about me with a will, first piling up the mass of fallen debris, then scratching out handfuls of soil from the ledge and putting them on top. Quickly I realised the futility of the scheme: the earth was so wet it spread out like sand, and by the end of ten minutes I had hardly diminished the height of the cliff by seven inches.

I tried to scratch out a hold in the shale, but the water had given it an incredible toughness, and I could do little more than make a shallow hole from which my fingers quickly slipped when I tried my weight. If only I could get one foot in the hole, however, for a second, it would give me time to reach the desired grip above—a thought particularly exasperating, for I appreciated also that had this ledge been

ordinary level ground the cliff would have presented no difficulty. By taking a run I could have jumped with one foot on to the scratched-out hold, and before the momentum had died, gripped the sod above and pulled myself into safety. The ledge was hardly four feet in width: at least three times that distance would be necessary for such a run. . . . Yet I was light and a good jumper: it would mean stepping back to the very edge of the precipice, where the slightest hesitation or slip would mean certain death.

I did not spend much time in consideration. With a small piece of sandstone I started work in the hold again until at last it was big enough to take my foot. Then deliberately (albeit with very great fear), I walked as near to the edge as the crumbling earth would permit. For a second I stood and measured the jump with my eye, then with the vigour that is only born of fear I ran forward, leapt to the hole, swung up with the momentum, and clasped my fingers in the Parnassus grass as my feet slipped away. Slowly now I wound my way up, "sucking" on to the shale with my stomach and flattened thighs, until at last my feet touched the grass and my hands were dug deep into the wet soil of the slope. *I was safe.*

I must have lain there in soft boggy soil for nearly five minutes before I realised that there still remained certain problems. My suit was utterly ruined; my cap had fallen off when I jumped. What had happened to Tom? Why had he whistled? Stiffly I clambered up the remaining dozen feet to the path, and then as I pulled myself over the grassy bank, I saw a sight that almost made me wish I was back on my ledge once more. Coming down the narrow track, but a dozen yards away, was Tom, with a very woebegone expression on his face. On one side of him was his father, looking very stern; on the other side was my own, looking even sterner.

I will draw a curtain over the subsequent proceedings, which were of an unnecessarily disagreeable and painful nature.

. . . . . .

This adventure and the painful event that followed ought to have cured me of my passion for the cliffs, but the herring-gull eggs had served but to arouse the lust for further trophies. Never did I see a kittiwake or a big "black backer" flying over the bay without my thinking of the eggs my collection still lacked, nor a cormorant winging south to Ravenscar at the end of its day's fishing without my picturing the treasures that high grim cliff might hold.

The cormorants, I knew, had a breeding-place there, and beyond all doubt I should find kittiwakes, and possibly a kestrel, if I climbed high enough. What eggs to be proud of these would be! I could hardly rest from thinking of them, and I made up my

mind to visit Ravenscar at the first opportunity.

This, for divers reasons, did not come for many days. My mother had lost all desire for flowers, and my repeated suggestions that I should be allowed to go and collect firewood along the beach were received with cold suspicion. Part of my punishment was that during my spare time I had to report home at the end of every hour, which did not permit of anything save an occasional sally to a quarry near the moor-edge, where I knew of a jackdaw's nest, with four squawking young ones, whose digestions I must have ruined by supplementing their diet with numerous worms and slugs.

One Saturday, however, towards the end of the month, a chance came. My parents had planned to go to Whitby for the day, catching the early train, and not returning until evening.

As soon as they were gone I ran quickly to the beach, where Tom already waited, and by the time they had taken their tickets at the station we were almost out of sight of the town, keeping to the broad flat scars which at low water enable one to cut across the curving of the bay and shorten a tedious journey of three and a half miles into less than two.

Midday found us lying on a tussock of grass at the sloping foot of the cliff, gazing up with eagerness and envy at the dizzy sandstone crags, counting the nests, guessing as to their contents, arguing as to which were herring-gulls' and which kittiwakes', straining our eyes for the famous cormorant ledge which, so far as we knew, no human being yet had climbed. It was Tom who found it. While I was taking a pebble from my boot, something big and black swooped down from the cliff, and, with a raucous croak, joined the wheeling and screaming gulls.

"Look! Look! There's a lot of 'em, that ledge with the white on it."

A hundred feet up the vertical face of the precipice was a bold sandstone bluff extending sideways for several yards, and forming at its base a flat underhung ledge, white with guano, and with at least a score of croaking cormorants waddling nervously about on it. As we looked two of them swooped down like the first, made a broad circle, and returned, croaking louder than ever, to their starting-point. Evidently they were nesting, for under ordinary circumstances they would not have returned until the danger was past.

"No good without a rope," was Tom's verdict; and at first glance I felt like agreeing with him. The cliff, as I have said, rose absolutely vertical from the slope on which we lay, and there seemed hardly a single foothold.

But my blood was afire with the lust of the eggs. Were we going to throw away the chance of getting a cormorant's egg without as much as

making a try? Never. For several minutes I studied out the possibilities of the direct climb, and my conclusion was that it was far from being hopeless. Sandstone is excellent climbing rock, and there might be a hundred foot- and hand-holes without their being visible from our present position.

Delaying no longer, we started up the slope, and in a couple of minutes stood directly under the ledge. The birds were now in very great commotion, flapping their wings, and jabbering away like a lot of old fishwives. Some were craning their long necks over the ledge, and peering down at us with angry flashing eyes. We began to feel scared. Would they attack me if I tried to climb? Tom thought they would, and he tried to persuade me not to take the risk; but while he argued I was taking off my boots and stockings, so that I could use my toes as well as my fingers.

Certainly it was much easier than I had thought. There was a long crack stretching half-way up which simplified things considerably, and I could see at least three possible holes between the top of it and the cormorants' ledge. But how should I reach the bottom of the crack? The first five feet of the cliff was smooth as marble, and without a projection on which a beetle might hold. Six inches higher there was a grip—a piece of weathered ironstone—but how could I even reach that? Tom supplied the solution. Standing a foot away from the cliff face, and bending his head forward until it touched the rock, he made a human step-ladder which I hastened to avail myself of before he repented of his willingness to help. With one hand on the ironstone it was easy enough to draw my knees up too, and then reach for the bottom of the long crack, which ran, not straight with the cliff, but at an angle that made it possible to grip firmly on its edge. Hardly had I drawn myself up, however, than there came a sudden flutter of wings, and something black swept out of the crevice almost into my very face. For a second I reeled back; but my hand had a firm hold, and I was held up in time. It was a jackdaw, and when I recovered my wits I could see the untidy bundle of sticks and heath that composed its nest. It had been a very near shave; for although the slope below was easy to climb, with the momentum of my fall I should have rolled with considerable force to the jagged rocks nearly sixty feet below.

"Come back! don't go any further!" cried Tom in a very scared voice; and, truth to say, I was so nervous just at that moment that I almost fell in with his wishes. But the thought of the eggs spurred me on, and, gripping the edge of the crack, with one knee wedged firmly into it, I started to climb again, worming myself up with my hands and toes and almost

every available part of my anatomy. In places the crack was so wide I had to bend my body like a steel spring and hang on with the friction of my shoulders and knees. In others it narrowed so that I could hardly get my fingers into it, and but for my bare toes I should have been forced to return. Occasionally I left it to take advantage of a series of better holds; but it was not until I was nearly eighty feet up that it ceased completely to be of use to me. At this point I rested, for it had been a strenuous enough journey. My toes and knees were scratched and bleeding, my whole body ached, but my heart was exultant. The ledge was now scarcely twenty feet above me. I was half-deafened by the croaking and cawing of the cormorants and the incessant screaming of the gulls. Looking down, I could see poor Tom still standing where I left him. He looked very unhappy, and although I could not hear his voice for the clamouring gulls, I knew he was calling me to return. It was hardly likely I should take much notice of him with the ledge so near; and pointing a hand to acquaint him of my intention, I turned my face upwards once more.

Short though the distance was compared with what I had already climbed, the last twenty feet was easily the worst, for what holds there were had a thick layer of greasy, stenching guano on them which made it almost impossible to get a grip. Not for one second from leaving the crack did I have that sense of temporary security that the feel of a good hold gives to a climber, and which at times makes him loath to move either up or down.

But for the thought of the eggs that would soon be mine, I would have turned back a dozen times. The cormorants had long since left the ledge, and had joined the circling gulls. Now and again one of them would fly very near, as though intending to return, but before its feet touched the rock it would swoop down again with an angry croak. Would they attack when I reached their nests? I began to wish I had brought my big jack-knife with me, for I should be entirely defenceless if they did.

Slowly but surely I mounted upwards until at last the ledge was a bare three feet above my head, and my fingers had found through the layer of filth a hold firm enough for the final effort. I rested a second, and then with the strength of arms and hands alone I pulled myself up so that my knees sank deep into the grease and took the weight, while my hands found a sure grip on the ledge itself, safe on to which a second later I dragged my aching body.

Oh! the utter relief of being able to lie flat on a firm broad rock with every muscle relaxed; to open my mouth wide and fill my panting lungs with air. But the smell—shall I ever forget it? I was lying on the accumulated filth of

centuries, a solid matrix of fish-bones, seaweed, twigs, and guano. It nearly made me sick, and quickly gave me an urgent desire to get back to the shore again.

Now for the eggs! I must see these quickly and make a choice. I got up on my knees and looked eagerly about me. Eggs? *There was not one....*

I had come too late in the season, for squawking noisily in the far corner of the ledge were nearly a score of fluffy blue-grey chicks, beating their wings in terror and backing as far away from me as they could.

My climb had been for nothing, and whether it was the bitter disappointment, or the nervous reaction, or terror of what still lay between me and safety, I cannot say, for suddenly I lost all control over my senses and began to cry like a baby. How I wished that I hadn't come, that I had gone to Whitby or stayed at home with my yacht, if only I could ... a loud croak and the heavy flapping of wings brought me back my wits. With horror I saw that two big cormorants had alighted hardly a yard away from where I was sprawled in the filth, and that they were adopting a most aggressive attitude. One of them made a sudden rush forward and gave a savage thrust at my bare foot with its wicked spear-like beak. I dodged just in time to receive the cruel jab of the second one on my thin-clad shoulder. Crying aloud with the pain of it, I moved back to the cliff wall, and with one hand dislodged a fair-sized stone. Even as I bent my arm to throw it three more birds alighted and prepared to join in the attack. Aiming at the nearest, I slung the stone with all my strength and caught it fair in the chest. It fell to the floor, and then flapping wildly, rolled over the edge and disappeared.

Alarmed by this turn in the battle, the remaining birds noisily took to their wings, and I had the ledge once more to myself and the terrified chicks. That they would come back very soon, however, and with reinforcements, I had no doubt, and hastily collecting a few fragments of egg-shell so as to have some souvenir of my visit, I crept to the edge and lowered my feet down to the first hold.

When modern man takes to climbing rocks he becomes for the time being a four-footed animal like his great-great-ancestors the apes, but with this one disadvantage—he has no tail. Thus in making a descent, instead of moving head first, as a prehensile tail would permit him to do, he must go feet first, and lose the temporary use of his eyes and the highly developed senses of his arms and fingers.

Even the descent of an ordinary rock climb with an abundance of good hand- and foot-holes is usually a hundredfold more difficult than the ascent, but in this instance the difficulties were increased out of all proportion. There was not a single decent hold between the

ledge and the top of the crack, and what crevices or projections there were had a thick coating of slippery guano upon them. I had to feel with my toes for a footing, and then, without a hold at all for my hands, slide my body down the rock face until my knees were secure, when my hands would replace my feet. In places I had even to use my chin, forcing it hard against the rock to act as a brake while I was testing the strength of a hold.

In spite of this I made good progress, and in ten minutes found myself scarcely a yard from the top of the crack, with only one really awkward place between me and comparative safety. The ledge on which I temporarily rested my feet was a soft Parnassus grass sod about four inches in width, threatening to give way if I imposed the slightest additional strain upon it. My fingers were gripping a narrow projection of rock, between which and the sod there was nothing but smooth sandstone. If I left go with my fingers the sod would break under my full weight, and there would be nothing to prevent my falling straight down to the rocks.

No purpose would be served by hesitation, however, and gulping down a lump that had come into my throat at the thought of the fall, I lifted one foot from the soil and commenced to lower it, at the same time leaving go with my hands and forcing the palms of them and my chin firm against the rock's face, so as to take as much weight as I could away from my one supporting foot.

Inch by inch my foot and my hands sank down until at last my fingers gripped the soft substance of the sod. Fearing delay, I lowered the other foot over at once, and then, without a moment's warning, came the hideous flapping of wings again, and I felt a sharp stab in the very middle of my back. For a second my hands loosened and I began to slip, but they gripped again in time. Flat as I was against the rock face I dare not turn, but I could see the shadows of at least three cormorants circling in the air not six feet away. One of them suddenly made a vicious jab at my foot, and caught it fair in the instep. I screamed with pain. Another dived for my head, missed it, and brushed my hair with its wings. The sod was now loosening, . . . it could not possibly bear my weight for another minute. To attempt to fight the cormorants in my present position was hopeless, and I started to lower my body down, gripping as best I could with my elbows, stomach, and chin as my hands lost their purchase. By this time my feet should be low enough for the crack . . . wildly I felt for it with my bleeding toes. Another cormorant dived down like a streak of lightning and delivered a sharp peck at my right thigh.

The sod was moving. . . . I screamed in mortal terror as

I felt my elbows slipping outwards . . . and then my feet found their hold in the top of the crack. Dead to all pain, I wedged them firmly into it, and then quickly bent down and gripped the edge with my hands even as the sod gave way and fell in a blinding storm of dust and soil on my head. *For the time being at any rate I was safe.* The cormorants had fallen back. Most of them were on the ledge croaking and chattering, but still very angry. Had they realised that the danger, from their point of view at any rate, was over—that their chicks were safe? Fervently I hoped so, for I had no stomach for further encounters.

A brief rest and I started down the crack, taking my time, and making a careful reconnaissance before attempting any portion of the climb that would expose me defenceless again, should the birds attack. The wound on my foot was so painful that it had taken all sense of touch from my toes, and I might have had a wooden leg for all the use it was to me.

. . . . . .

Nearly half an hour passed before my feet touched the ironstone nodule, and I heard Tom's very welcome voice screaming above the noise of the gulls and the sea. He soon got into position against the rock face, and I as quickly lowered my legs, grasped my bleeding limbs about his neck, and slipped down his body to the sure firm earth, on to which I threw myself with a relief that no words could possibly express.

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

PLACE FOR THE BOLSHEVISTS!—ORGANISED IGNORANCE—THE DANGERS OF OPPORTUNISM—THE UNCHANGING STANDARDS OF TRUTH—WHERE OUR DUTY LIES.

ONCE upon a time in a western State a man was being tried for his life. While the trial was still going on, a mob of ruffians, having taken already the law into their own hands and executed the prisoner, clamoured at the court-house, and said to the judge: "When will this trial be over, because we want the room to lay out the corpse in." This story came to our minds when we read the account of the solemn proceedings at Lympne. So Lenin with a grim smile might have asked the representatives of France and England, "How much longer are you going to discuss a futile question? When you have quite done with Sir Philip Sassoon's comfortable villa, it will be useful to me for the laying out of the body of a perished Europe." The levity of Mr George, indeed, has added another episode to the tragic farce of international politics. There is nothing which our Prime Minister has not done to cajole the Bolshevists. He has brow-beaten them and submitted to them alternately, and at last, when his words no longer carried any weight, he discussed peace with the forces of Lenin marching upon Warsaw!

It would be difficult to match Mr George's futility in the annals of the past. To all his sentimental appeals for peace Lenin turned a deaf ear. Krassin and Kameneff, with their fluent promises of bulging corn-bins, came and went as they would. The Red Government, still bent upon the destruction of Europe, was obediently recognised by the Minister who said he would never shake hands with murderers; and Poland was more closely, more brutally threatened than ever. While Lenin acted Mr George talked, and actually went so far as to say that he would be seriously displeased if his wishes were not instantly complied with. But the man who fears to meet force with force had better hold his tongue, and not the fabled luxury of Sir Philip Sassoon's gilded "residence" is sufficient excuse for those who chatter in the face of an advancing foe.

It is Mr George's practice to worship opportunism rather than opportunity. Opportunity is a fickle jade, who never repeats the offer of her charms. The lock which she wears in her forehead must be seized at once or it will ever elude the aspiring lover. When once

she has passed, it is too late to recover the vanished moment. And it is in accord with Mr George's temperament that he can never make up his mind to seize the fleet-foot Opportunity. She gives him the go-by with a stern contempt, and he is left with nothing better to embrace than her unnatural sister, Opportunism. He must always be content with whatever is awkward and ugly. In other words, in his attachment to the politician's momentary success, he must ever surrender the triumph of the statesman.

Assuredly there has been little enough statesmanship in his management of the Polish question. From first to last he has been completely dominated by Lenin. Now Lenin is a fanatical scoundrel, who knows little or nothing of foreign countries or foreign opinion. But he does know one thing: he knows what he wants. From the very first he has aimed at a world-wide revolution, at corrupting the opinions of all the proletariats with Russian gold. How far he has succeeded is evident to us all. Mr George also knows but one thing: he knows that he wants to stay in office as long as he can, no matter what it costs. The combat between the two men, therefore, is obviously unequal. To the concentrated malignity of Lenin is opposed the discursive garrulity of our Welshman. Lenin has a policy, cruelly shaped and brutally applied. Mr George has no policy at all, unless you call it a policy to put off a little longer the evil day. When Lenin explains that he means to force a bloodthirsty revolution upon every country in Europe, Mr George replies with unctuous flattery of our own revolutionaries. He permits himself to be swayed by a mere suggestion thrown out by Labour, and is so feebly irresolute that he welcomes Mr Thomas's intervention not only in Russia, but in Ireland. How is it possible that he should win in a duel with Lenin? How shall he even oppose with any success the sinister plottings of "Lord" Lansbury, that eminent Christian, and his cosmopolitan friends?

At every point of the game Mr George has been beaten. On July 11 he demanded of the Soviet an immediate armistice between Poland and Russia. The demand was rejected. On July 20 Lord Curzon, acting of course as the humble representative of the omnipotent Mr George, warned the Russians that if the Soviet armies still marched on Poland, the Allies would help the Poles. Of course the Soviet armies went on marching, and of course the Allies made no effort to give the Poles the help which they had promised. Then followed weeks of prevarication. The Russians broke faith as they chose, and were not called to account. The Poles, if they were ever so foolish as to rely upon our promises, were handsomely punished

for their credulity, and it was proved once more that honour is never safe in the keeping of a democracy.

And then, to make the breaking of our obligations a certainty, organised labour, which has had no training in foreign politics, and which has hitherto been supposed to support the cause of oppressed nationalities struggling to be free, emphasised its futility and its ignorance by espousing the cause of the tyrant Lenin. For the impertinence of organised labour and its leaders there is no excuse whatever. Between them, they are attempting to engross all the power of the State. They clamoured for universal suffrage, and they have got something very like it. That is not enough for them. If their superstitions or their prejudices are interfered with for a moment, they cry aloud for what they call "direct action," and they will insist upon a policy of "down-tools" as soon as ever a British Minister dares to thwart the imperious will of the new Russian autocrats. That policy, of course, is a negation of democracy and of sound government, and if it be persisted in will bring the British Empire to a speedy end. It is impossible to govern an Empire, a province, or even a parish, if you are asked daily to submit to the petulance of this class or of that, and unless the mass of our citizens are able to acquire some sort of political sense, then assuredly Great Britain will go the way of all other futile democracies.

Meanwhile Mr George, emerging from the oriental splendour of Lympne, addressed a deputation of the Labour Council of Action before he took the House of Commons into his confidence. That this is an inconvenient method there can be no doubt. The Prime Minister, by the mere fact that he gave a privileged political body the first opportunity of hearing him, proclaimed at once his own fear and that political body's privilege. As Mr George said himself, in a momentary aberration of courage, we have not had a Soviet Government established in this country yet. The thoughts and plans of Mr George, if any, can reach the Labour Council of Action from the House of Commons as readily as they can reach any other collection of voters, and it is difficult to defend Mr George's willingness to forestall and to satisfy the curiosity of a violently egoistic group. Above all, we resent Mr Bevin's impudent pretension that he and his friends did not approach Mr George as a political body. If they are not a political body, it would be interesting to know what they are. They are not a tea meeting nor a Sunday-school nor a slate club. They are politicians pure and simple—politicians fighting for their own hands—with no thought of any class than their own, and with very little love

of the country which bore them and bred them. If they may be said to cherish any ideal, it is an ideal of gross materialism, a tyranny of the breeches' pocket which exceeds in selfishness even the Anti-Corn-Law League of Mr Cobden.

However, as Mr George knows only too well, the party of Mr Bevin and his friends is excellently organised, and finds some justification in the flattery bestowed upon it if it believes itself the veritable workmen's council which shall exterminate the *bourgeoisie* and take full possession of England. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr George's speech, delivered in the House of Commons, was also addressed directly to the Champions of Labour. Our Prime Minister did not attempt to gain the ear and to capture the understanding of England and of Europe. He appealed to a far narrower audience —the audience of Labour—and with the greatest cunning he found precisely the arguments which might be expected to persuade it. He did not spare Poland. "The Polish attack," said he, "was not justified in our judgment, and I sincerely regret that it was made in spite of the warning of France and of England. . . . The Soviet Government in any conditions of peace is entitled to take into account the fact of the attack made by the Polish Army upon Russia. They are also entitled to take into account that those attacks were delivered in spite of the warnings of the Allies." Though the facts are not indisputable, they are an essential part of Mr George's argument. For he goes on to say that "whatever the mistakes may be which were committed by a government in an act of aggression upon another nation, nothing justifies a retaliation or a reprisal or a punishment which goes to the extent of wiping out national existence." The principle enunciated by Mr George is sound enough, the sounder perhaps because it is almost impossible for one nation to wipe out another. It is not a principle which Mr George, fresh from doing his best to wipe out Austria and Hungary, that he might invent the ridiculous things called Czecho-Slovakia and Jugo-Slavia, has any right to advance. However, his purpose is clear enough. He wishes Labour to understand first that Poland is greatly to blame, and second, that Russia would inflict too severe a punishment if it attempted to wipe out Poland's national existence. The attempt to wipe out Poland has been made before now and failed. But the treaty of Versailles has changed all the circumstances. Mr George failed to remind his hearers that he and the Allies have made themselves responsible for the making and the maintaining of an independent Poland.

From Poland Mr George turned to Soviet Russia, and again, for the benefit of Labour, he painted the

tyranny of Lenin and Trotsky in the dark and hideous colours of the truth. Out of the mouths of Mrs Snowden and Mr Bertrand Russell he convicted the so-called revolutionary government of Russia of all the crimes that ever could be committed by the most brutal autocracy ever imagined by the mind of man. And thus he reached the conclusion that if the independence of Poland be threatened England and her Allies would help the Poles to defend their freedom with "advice and direction." No Allied troops shall be sent to Poland. But if the Bolshevist Government imposes conditions upon a beaten foe which are "inconsistent with national freedom and are excessive," the Allies, out of the stores at their disposal, will help to equip the Polish people for its defence. It is not an heroic proposal, and it is not likely to check the Red armies if they are minded to march across Europe in order to establish, with fire and sword, the supreme and deadly benefit of Soviet government. But for the moment it seemed to pacify Labour. Mr Clynes, speaking for once as a member of Parliament and not as one of our tyrants, was kind enough to say that if Polish nationality or independence were seriously menaced, he and his friends would have to consider their position. "We recognise," said he, "that the independence of the Polish nation is essential to the continued peace of the world."

So far, so good. And if we conduct ourselves with discretion and obey the Labour Council, we need not fear the immediate risk of direct action. Our good and kindly autocrats will refrain from putting on the screw, so they say, if the rest of the British nation is scrupulous in obedience. But all the trump-cards remain in the hands of Lenin, who is still master of the game. You cannot match the kings and aces of troops in the field with the small cards of rhetoric and pious aspiration. And we only hope—and we hope with great uncertainty—that we shall not be asked to combat the armed opinion of Bolshevism on the banks of the Rhine.

The ultimate fate of Poland and of Europe, endangered by opportunism, will not be settled in a month or in a year. But one plain truth emerges from the discussion, so far as it has gone, and that is that Parliamentary government is for the time wholly suspended. Mr George cares little for those who occupy the benches in front of him or behind. It is the half-formed Soviets outside the House which he is at pains to conciliate. The situation is at once novel and dangerous. Never was there a time when resolution was more obviously necessary. The aim of Lenin is what the Kaiser's aim was six years ago—the domination of the world. The coldly fanatical monster

aims at acquiring universal power by disintegrating all the civilised countries of Europe. He knows full well what can be achieved by the union of propaganda and bloodshed. His ill-omened words have had the force of bloodthirsty deeds. And neither he nor his lieutenants shrink from murder. The unspeakable Apfelbaum, Lenin's trusty colleague, is good enough to say that if the suppression of 10,000,000 recalcitrants be necessary he will steel his heart for the job. We have no doubt that he will. And since the excesses of Sadism are dangerously catching, we know not how soon the example of Apfelbaum may not exert its influence in the West. The risk of a world-revolution is not overpast, and we can avoid it best by initiating a consistent and uniform policy.

The first step in this initiation is to restore to our politics the principle which we have lost. If they have not principle, in vain do our governors speak and act. If there be no difference between peace and war, between Home Rule and the Union, between dumping and the encouragement of national industry, then truly we may discard morals altogether, and judge good and evil only by the momentary success which they bring to idle rhetoricians. Our one chance of restoring the national security and the national self-esteem, which once were our pride, is to see to it that members of Parliament shall vote as their consciences dictate, and not as they are bidden by the wire-pullers of an unmoral coalition. Of what use is it to prate of the freedom of Poland, and then in the same moment to denounce by word and deed freedom of speech and freedom of thought in the House of Commons? The war has brought with it many changes. It has not transformed the unchanging standards of truth, and the member of Parliament who has hitherto been staunch to the Union cannot accept the futile experiment in Home Rule now offered to him, without putting a stain upon the public life of England.

Foolishly do our rulers ask "what does it matter?" or "how shall we stand firm against the spirit of the age?" It is not the spirit of the age to which they surrender. It is to the spirit of cowardice and sloth. It is far easier to give way to Mr Clynes or Mr Smillie or Mr Bevin, to Mr Valera or to Dr Griffiths, than to oppose the plain and simple truth of the sophistries of these turbulent men. But the more you give to these turbulent men, the more will they ask. Take, for instance, the sad case of Ireland. We have renounced all principle in the government of that country. The men who were once prepared to sacrifice for the Union their very existence as politicians, stand by to-day in utter helpless indifference. The result is that many men—

soldiers and constables and officials — whom the Government is bound in honour to protect, are foully murdered and go unavenged. When it is suggested that the criminals should be caught and punished, our governors, with meekly folded hands, murmur *non possumus*, and do not see that their wicked inactivity makes them the accomplices of murderers. There is the stain of blood upon Mr George and upon all his colleagues.

But since it is far easier not to govern than to govern, the old principle of duty is callously renounced. The law and the order, the maintenance of which was once considered the first business of Government, are laughed at to-day as vain and empty words. They come within the scope of principle; they are not innocent of the taint of morals; and therefore they are sternly despised by the brisk modern champion of opportunism, who never looks further back than yesterday or further forward than to-morrow, and who is prepared to justify by an argument, found after the event, whatever he or any friend of his chooses to do or (more often) leave undone. And law and order are not the only things which have gone into the limbo of oblivion. The old-fashioned virtue of honesty, which once was a wholesome check upon our public men, is nowadays wholly discredited. None is so simple as to believe the unsupported word of a politician, and this lack of trust naturally brings the House of Commons into disrepute. Is it, then, wonderful that the noisy members of Labour Councils should regard the parliamentary system with contempt, and pretend that direct action is the best means by which to attain their own selfish ends?

And as we have no principle in our home politics, so our foreign policy also is devoid of principle. This is the more dangerous, because here we endanger not only ourselves but other countries. The one principle consistently observed in this field seems to be that America can do no wrong — that is, however we shape our policy at home or abroad, our first consideration must be to win the approval of the United States. Had we dared to free our hands from the shackles put upon them by American politicians, what a different story should we have to tell in Ireland! And if we had followed principle in the matter of foreign policy, we should have seen always that the one thing important for us is the friendship of France. In sentiment, in tradition, in interest we are at one with the French. Our history is theirs, their aspirations are ours. In arms, as in arts, we have been closely allied with the surest kind of alliance, which comes from hard fighting and clean hostility. Since Chaucer's time we have exchanged views and influences. At the outset we owed the French the heaviest debt.

By initiating the romantic movement in France we more than repaid them. What Ronsard, Molière, Voltaire, and many another had given us, Sir Walter Scott and Byron gave back in full measure. They, perhaps, have never understood our best. We, also, have sometimes selected our gods from the Olympus of France indiscreetly. Shakespeare has too often appeared a barbarian to our neighbours. We have not appreciated at its proper worth the well-ordered beauty of Racine. To some English readers the elder Dumas has appeared more prodigally gifted than Balzac. The French, who have missed the meaning of Fielding, have found in Richardson a miracle of sensibility, and having discovered a great poet in Young of the 'Night Thoughts,' have remained deaf to the exquisite poetry of Keats and Shelley. These misunderstandings, on either side, were inevitable. The truth, which must never be forgotten, is that, in the search after beauty, the French and the English have been always united, and have sometimes surprised it lurking in the same hidden corner.

We have been secular enemies. We have fought one another at Crecy and Agincourt, at Fontenoy and Blenheim, in the Peninsula and at Waterloo. And when the fighting has been done, it has not left behind either the pride of victory or the rancour of defeat. We have drawn the sword, let us hope, as honourable opponents; we have sheathed it as gentlemen; and not even the fiercest fray has left behind in the mouths of either the bitter taste of enmity or disdain. As in warfare, so in politics, we have marched together with an equal step. Our political philosophers have exchanged views and swopped constitutions. Nothing which the one has thought or done has been indifferent to the other. Montesquieu was profoundly influenced by the example of England, which in her turn was perhaps too eager to turn to account the lessons of the French Revolution. But, rightly or wrongly, the Channel has joined rather than divided us; and there is no doubt that the civilisation of Europe depends still, as it has always depended, upon the essential harmony of France and England.

It is true that the French and the English differ profoundly in temper and in sentiment. The differences of friends are but the closer buckling of friendship. We English are an instinctive people. We jump at what we think the right conclusion, and skip the intervening steps. The French are logical always, even when they base their reasoning upon false premisses. They are dissatisfied if the argument be not conducted according to the rules, and, being artists, still love dialectics for their own sakes. Thus we and our neighbours are complementary. They give

what we lack; we teach them some lessons which have escaped them. Together we are, as may we always remain, irresistible. For we are civilised both, and have climbed to a pinnacle of intelligence which is as yet out of the reach of the Germans and Americans alike.

If, therefore, what we know as civilisation is to survive, it must be kept in being by the joint effort of France and England. Nor should there be to-day any risk of dissension or disagreement. We have for four long years fought side by side upon the field of battle. We have together foiled the Huns' attempt to dominate the world. We have rescued Europe from the clutch of a baleful *Kultur*. If we remain friends, nothing can harm us. We are strong enough and brave enough to keep the Boche at bay, and to ensure that the ideals which we have shared shall not vanish from the earth. None knows this more clearly than the Huns, and if only they could drive a wedge, as the saying goes, between us, they would shed no tears over the lost war. That is what they are trying to do with all their might. The secret merchants of propaganda are busily at work. You may see the effect of their cunning in newspapers, you may hear it in speeches. Baleful words are put by enemies in unsuspecting lips. Books and articles are inspired stealthily by agents, whose names the authors (and victims) have never heard. And if the plot which is alive on either side the Channel be not constantly watched we shall wake up one fair (or foul) morning and find that the work of victory has been quietly and wickedly undone.

Consider for a moment what would happen if there were a rupture of the friendly bond which binds France and England to-day. One power would be left supreme in Europe, and that power would be Germany. The plain men, who at Versailles boasted of their plainness, have destroyed without ruth or reason Austria and Hungary, and have left no counterpoise in the East to the restless savage temper of Prussia. Why they did this we shall know perhaps in fifty years. Was it in malice or in ignorance? The malice was there, truly enough, and so was the ignorance. We can even guess whose was the cunning that lay behind the criminal invention of Czecho-Slovakia, and which forced Messrs George and Wilson to forget the very sound principle that if Austria had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent it. But since Germany, with a larger population, is left to face France unhampered, our duty becomes clear indeed. Though self-interest is never the sole efficient motive of politics, let us forget for a moment the intelligence, the wisdom, and the needs of France, and consider what would happen to us

were we to leave our friend and neighbour to be devoured by Germany.

France at the first opportunity would be overrun by the Boches, who would seize the Channel ports, and thence begin the campaign against England, of which they have always dreamed, and will always dream. When once they were established with their heavy guns and their aeroplanes, and their submarines at Calais and Boulogne, they would have every reason to believe the conquest of England not impossible. If they were justified of their belief, then we should pay for our foolish unnecessary division from the French by the total extinction of our life and liberty, our customs and ideals. Perhaps it is putting too heavy a price upon bad temper to run such a risk; and it would be well if the rhetoricians and journalists of London and Paris, who just now are busily engaged in promoting a ceaseless and a dangerous quarrel, were to reflect with some sincerity upon the result which their carelessness might produce.

What, then, are the thoughts and suspicions which might, if they were not checked, divide France and England? France, not without reason, begins to doubt the seriousness of our politicians. It is our misfortune that our noisiest mouthpieces at present are Messrs George and Churchill. That the French should understand Mr George's dangerous habit of permitting his audiences to make his speeches is hardly to be expected. Mr George is a phenomenon which lies altogether outside their experience. And when, to please this or that section of Labour, he cheerfully surrenders the cause for which France and England have bled, the French cannot be expected to understand him. They are at a complete loss, moreover, when Mr George suddenly supports the infamous pretensions of Germany, or reveals in a flash the deep and constant affection which he cherishes for the blood-stained Bolsheviks. These experiments in policy of the ignorant amateur are profoundly disquieting to the French, who have at once a wider knowledge and a quicker instinct than Mr George will ever appreciate. Again, when Mr Churchill, in defiance of all the decent traditions of public life, prints an article in a newspaper, suggests that the Germans should bar the road against the encroaching horde of savages and revolutionaries, and hints that if they did this without any ulterior design, they would have made a gigantic step along the path of their redemption, the French may be excused if they rub their eyes and wonder whether there ever was a treaty signed and sealed at Versailles.

Nor is Mr Churchill's monstrous indiscretion the worst of the rebuffs which have been administered to the pride and patriotism of France. Mr Keynes, another official upon

whom the professional secret has weighed but lightly, has done his best to frighten and to alienate the French, who may be forgiven if they take Mr Keynes and his work more seriously than they deserve. And thus an impression has been created that the English are practically indifferent to the carrying out of the Treaty, that their greatest desire is to see the Germans once more upon their feet, trading busily to the discomfiture of ruined France and crippled Belgium in all the marts of the world. We, on the other hand, if our newspapers may be believed, seem to detect in the French a recrudescence of the military spirit. We charge them foolishly enough with wanting to get more out of the peace than the peace warrants. We see our own Mr George smiling blandly upon the Bolsheviks, whose ensanguined hand he would not take a few months ago, and we object, most unreasonably, that the French do not share our faith in the bursting corn-bins. But it is superfluous to lean too heavily upon the causes of difference. When friends and neighbours squabble, any pretext or none serves for controversy.

But even if we were to put the worst construction upon the arguments which have disturbed our unanimity, we must all, both French and English, recognise that nothing will ever justify the disturbing of our good relations. To flatter a false pride for the sake of murmuring irrelevantly "I told you so," we might imperil once more the safety of Europe. That we should wholly understand, or be understood by, a Latin race is almost impossible. The tradition of many centuries, the blood that flows in our veins, differing systems of education — these would prevent the French and the English speaking the same language, even if they had shared a common idiom. The barrier of speech is not insurmountable. It is rare, indeed, that any one, French or English, can climb over the barrier of thought. Clearly, then, it is the first duty of France and England both to brush away the smallest suspicion of misunderstanding. Each must take the good faith and the good will of the other for granted. Neither must be repelled by a phrase or a whim of which the reason is not quickly apparent. Truly, if either country, for the sake of an insistent pedantry, quarrelled with the other, then would Germany resume the struggle for the domination of the world, and with a far better chance of success than in 1914.

And we must remember that, since we have been protected by the sea against the bitter losses incurred by France, it is our duty before all things to be generous and forbearing. The men, side by side with whom we have fought in the trenches, with whom we shared the hardships of the war, have returned many

of them to devastated homes, to broken factories, to ruined coal-mines. Let us never forget that the Germans, of malice aforethought, destroyed the industries of France, that they themselves might capture the markets of Europe after the war. That is the essential fact. And let us resolve that, until France has rebuilt her factories and reopened her mines, we will not encourage the Germans in commerce by sea or by land. Herein justice and friendship join hands, and if we are determined upon a policy which is at once friendly and just, we can neglect all the pin-pricks, which we either give or take, in obedience to the subtle suggestion of interested foes.

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